
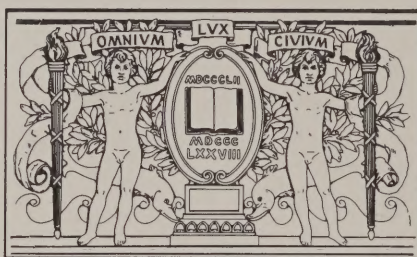


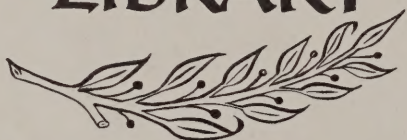
GOV DOG  
A  
M3/316  
RA  
75/7

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY  
  
3 9999 06585 646 8





**BOSTON  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY**





















M3/B16  
RA  
75/7

pt. 1

0017

WORKING DRAFT  
FOR  
COMMUNITY REVIEW

BMA-0157

BACK BAY - BEACON HILL

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City Of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	[Page]
A. SHORT HISTORY	[3]
B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	[11]
Back Bay-Beacon Hill District	
Back Bay Subarea	
Beacon Hill Subarea	
C. PAST PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT	[13]
D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	[19]
1. High Rents, Housing Deterioration	
2. Commercial Area Instability	
3. Neighborhood Capital Improvement and Service Needs	
4. Downtown Redevelopment Project Impacts	
5. Institutional Expansion/Contraction	
6. Traffic Congestion And Parking Inadequacy	
E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[27]
F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS	[29]
G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS AS RELATED TO ISSUES, STRATEGIES AND 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[30]





## INTRODUCTION

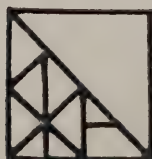
This report, prepared by the Back Bay-Beacon Hill District Planner, is a draft document intended to form the basis of discussion among residents and city representatives on planning strategies and investment needs.

The report establishes a base of population, income and housing data and provides information on recent past public and private investment in Back Bay-Beacon Hill. This material can be used by the district planner and others involved in the planning process, including neighborhood residents, Little City Hall staff and other city agencies and departments.

An analysis of the major issues confronting the district is also offered here, together with recommended strategies. These strategies should form the basis for community discussions in the Community Development Block Grant and capital improvement participation process as well as for involvement in issues which are not addressed by City expenditures such as rezoning, private development or wholly funded state programs.

The report recognizes that strategies are not self-fulfilling and makes recommendations for investments, both public and private, which are necessary to help carry through the recommended strategies.





BACK BAY/BEACON HILL



## A. SHORT HISTORY

The Back Bay-Beacon Hill District consists of two historically and architecturally distinct residential neighborhoods whose viability today results in large part from a history of sound planning, adaptability to change, and well-organized community groups.

### Beacon Hill

The Hill was originally known as Trimountain but its three peaks were soon cut down to make building possible and start the filling of the Boston shore and river lines. The Hill takes its name from its central peak where a warning beacon stood to protect the colony from Indians and foreign invaders.

The modern history of the Hill started with the building of the new State House near where the old beacon had stood. The south slope, with its views of both the Common and the Charles River, made an ideal location for the fine homes which were in demand in prosperous, post-revolutionary Boston. A syndicate known as the Mt. Vernon Proprietors purchased some 20 acres and laid out Louisburg Square and a grid pattern of streets. They established broad setbacks on Mt. Vernon Street and imposed various deed restrictions so that only brick or stone residences could be built. Only three streets extended all the way across the Hill: Charles, Mt. Vernon and Joy.

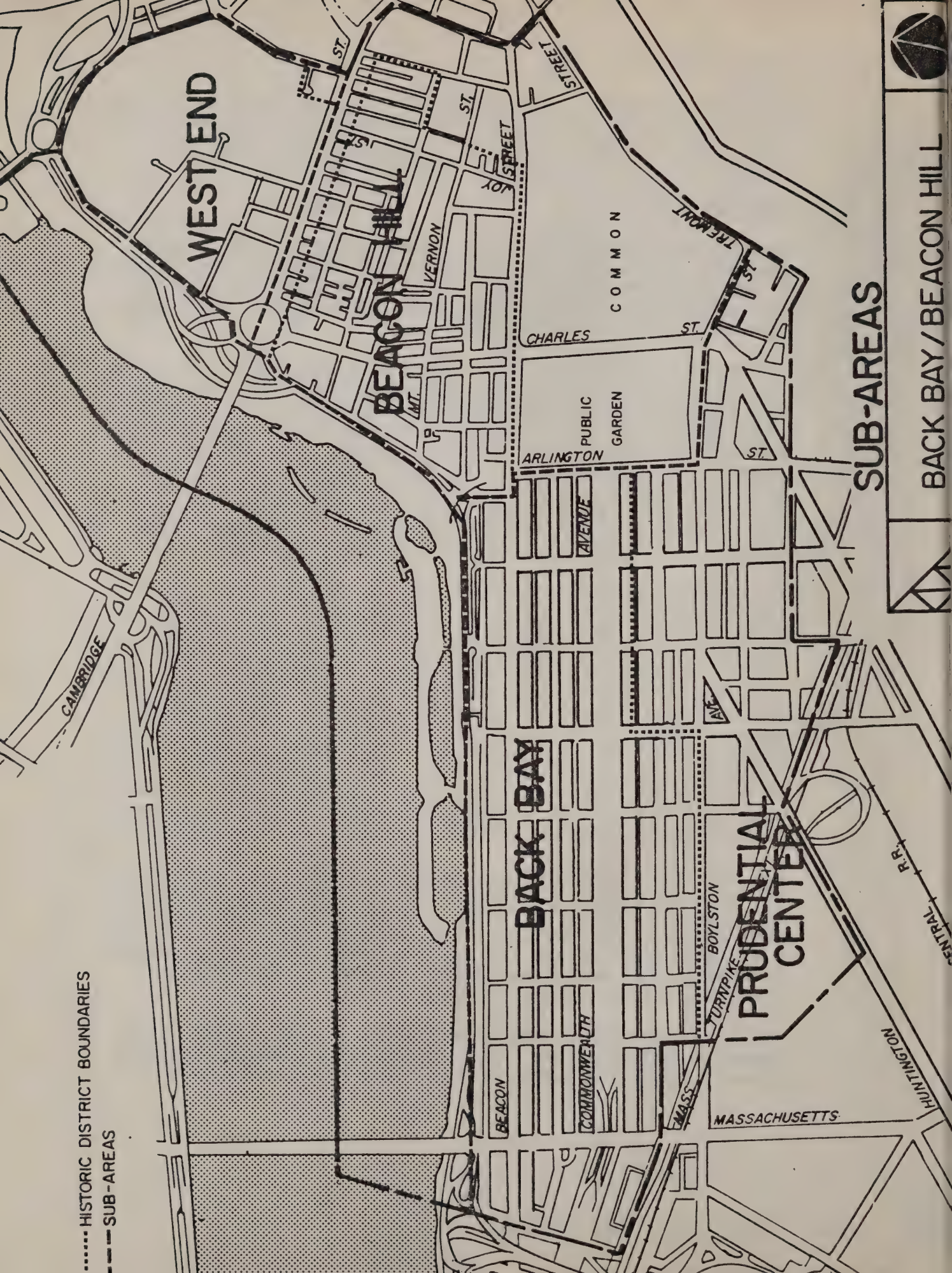
The less desirable north slope was set apart from the south by two long blocks on the north side of Pinckney Street. Development there took place in a much less coherent pattern. At the end of the 18th century, the north slope had three distinct subareas: a section of stately Bulfinch houses around Bowdoin Square, a redlight district near the river, and the first substantial Black neighborhood in Boston between Joy and Phillips Streets. Various events -- the development of the State House, the opening of the West Boston Bridge across the Charles River, the establishment of Massachusetts General Hospital, the settling of the Back Bay and South End -- led to the rise and fall of the north slope. Wooden and brick houses were built in the first half of the nineteenth century and tenements in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The same fate of changing land use on the edges of the district affected, although to a lesser extent, the south slope. The Back Bay caught the fancy of affluent old families and newly rich alike after the Civil War, and some of the south slope fell into decline. A hard core of old Beacon Hill families never left for the more fashionable Back Bay or the suburbs, however, so this threat of change was held to north of Pinckney Street.

The Beacon Hill Civic Association, founded in 1922 rallied strong community feeling for the Hill. Private capital steadily improved property, and the concerted efforts of the BHCA secured zoning



..... HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARIES  
--- SUB-AREAS



# SUB-AREAS

BACK BAY / BEACON HILL





protection and resisted encroachment. Popularity and prices soared in the 20's; prices slumped but popularity only fell off slightly in the depressed 30's. After World War II, as more and more young families remained or came to the Hill, values rose again.

The establishment of the Beacon Hill Historic District with architectural controls in 1955 was a significant factor in the continued improvement of the area. In 1958 the law was strengthened to include the control of the demolition of dwelling units and interior color, and the historic district was extended to include Lower Beacon Hill, between Charles Street and the Charles River Basin. In 1963 the historic district was extended again to within 40 feet of Cambridge Street and east to Bowdoin Street. The 1964 Boston Zoning Code zoned all of the Beacon Hill to a floor area ratio of two with an overall height limit of 65 feet for general residential use except for Charles and Cambridge Streets, which remain for local business.

The most dramatic chapter of modern history in Beacon Hill concerns the Charles River Development. In January 1958, a 47.1-acre parcel bounded by Cambridge, Blossom, Allen, Charles, Lowell and Stamford Streets was designated for renewal. This area, the former West End, was a low- and moderate-income residential community. A great deal of controversy accompanied the relocation of the residences and businesses to provide a cleared redevelopment site. The development of residential, commercial, office and parking uses has proceeded in stages at a total cost of \$11.7 million in federal project capital grants and \$5.9 million of city investment.

### Back Bay

The Back Bay was originally a broad, shallow body of water separating Boston from Brookline and bordering the narrow neck of land access to Roxbury in the vicinity of the present South End. Until the creation of the Public Garden, the marshes of the Back Bay reached Boston Common.

Development of the Back Bay began in 1814 when the Boston and Roxbury Mill Corporation proposed a scheme to harness its tidal flow for commercial purposes. A granite-faced mill dam completed in 1821 stretched across the bay from Charles Street to Sewall's Point (now Kenmore Square) along a route corresponding to the present Beacon Street. A shorter cross-dam intersected the mill dam and divided the Back Bay into full and receiving basins. The project, however, was soon forced to compete with steam powered manufacturing and never became the financial success envisioned by its promoters. Railroad lines built on trestles across the dammed basins in the 1830's further frustrated industrial development by impeding the flow of water in the bay.

By 1840, stagnating Back Bay waters produced such a sewerage problem that city health officials demanded the area be filled in the interest of the public welfare. In 1852, a special commission was



appointed by the state legislature to prepare a plan for the development of the Back Bay, and the filling operation began five years later. By 1880, the entire area now known as the Back Bay District was solid ground; by 1890, the fill extended beyond Kenmore Square and was continuing along Bay State Road. At its completion, the monumental Back Bay project had added 450 acres of land to the City of Boston.

The design of the Back Bay District was very much influenced by the impressive Parisian boulevards of Second Empire France. Unlike earlier residential plans for Beacon Hill or the South End, the Back Bay was not divided into tree-lined squares but was conceived as a grand scheme of generously landscaped, parallel avenues. Commonwealth Avenue, designed as the dominant boulevard, provided a central linear park and connected the green open spaces of the Common and Public Garden with those of the Fenway system.

From its inception, the Back Bay was planned as both a major civic improvement and a substantial residential district. It soon attracted many of the city's leading families, and the handsome townhouses and splendid mansions that began to line the streets reflected the tastes of fashionable and affluent clientele. Despite many variations in architectural style, the Back Bay was distinguished by the general consistency of character, form and scale. This was strongly encouraged by the original far-sighted deed restrictions, which specified minimum building heights, generous setbacks on all major streets and masonry construction. Together with later limitations on building mass, these restrictions assured the development of a continuous street facade, regular cornice and mansard roof lines, and a repetitive pattern of projecting oriel and bay windows.

The residential development of the Back Bay reflects four distinct phases of Victorian architecture. During the late 1850's and 1860's, the cosmopolitan French style dominated readily identified by mansard roof and brownstone masonry. After 1870, various stylistic modifications produced a second period of Back Bay architecture characterized by an ornamental, freer treatment of French architectural detail and return to brick masonry. The Ruskin Gothic style also emerged during this period with its polychrome masonry, brickwork ornament, and medieval detailing described by steep gables, pointed arches and towerlike roof projections. By the late 1870's, Back Bay architecture entered a third phase, defined by two styles: Queen Anne, displaying brickwork plaques of foliate, floral or sunburst fancifully shaped dormer windows, stepped Dutch gables and numerous tall chimney stacks, and Romanesque Revival, characterized by broad masonry arches, roughly textured walls, slit-like openings, bundles of thick colonnettes and somber contrasts of red brick and rusticated brownstone. The final period of Victorian architecture in the Back Bay, dependent on meticulous references to earlier building styles -- including Italian Renaissance, English and American Georgian and French Chateausque -- distinguishes its late nineteenth and early twentieth century construction.

The original restrictions against incompatible land uses, more recently replaced by zoning, have protected sizeable sections of the area against commercial encroachment. In 1966, the legislature established the Back Bay Residential District and the Back Bay Architectural Commission, a design review board within the Boston Redevelopment Authority. All plans for new constructions, demolition, exterior rehabilitation and repair of existing buildings, and all proposals for new signs, awnings and other structural features must be submitted to the Commission for their consideration.

The successful experience of the new Commission in guiding and controlling exterior changes in the Back Bay led to further action to extend the District to cover the adjoining commercial blocks of Newbury and Boylston Streets from Dartmouth Street to Massachusetts Avenue. In 1974 the City Council and the legislature amended the original act to change the name of the area involved to the Back Bay Architectural District and to enlarge the District as mentioned (see map). Since the enlargement of the area of the Commission's jurisdiction, a majority of its formal decisions have related to changes on Newbury and Boylston Street buildings.

Concurrent with establishment of the Back Bay Residential District and Architectural Commission was the ground-breaking for the Prudential Center. In April 1965, the redevelopment of the former railroad and lumber yard began. This private effort by the Prudential Insurance Company resulted in the construction of 781 apartment units, a shopping mall of 30 stores and 1,534,289 square feet of office space located in two towers, the tallest of which is 52 stories.



## EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Information on population and housing in this report is derived from the United States Census. The data is available on a subarea basis which does not conform in all cases to the neighborhood boundaries. A certain amount of approximation, therefore, is involved in the data. Additionally, the data does not reflect demographic changes which might have taken place since 1969, when the Census was taken.

Two subareas have been delineated for the purpose of analysis in this report: Back Bay and Beacon Hill. They are separated from each other by the Boston Common and Public Garden. Back Bay includes the Prudential Center, an area of major new residential, office and commercial construction. The Beacon Hill subarea contains the Hill and also the former West End neighborhood, which extends from the north side of Cambridge Street to Leverett Circle and Lowell Street and includes the Charles River Park development and a number of major hospitals (Massachusetts General, Massachusetts Eye and Ear, Shriners Burns).

### BACK BAY-BEACON HILL DISTRICT

The 1970 census estimated the total population of the Back Bay-Beacon Hill District at 31,874 persons, an increase of 7% from 1960, while that of Boston decreased by 7% in the 1960's. It is a very densely populated area, with figures of 43 people per acre and 25 housing units per square acre contrasting with 20 and 7, respectively, for the city. Since 1950, these density figures have been steadily increasing while those of Boston have declined. Back Bay-Beacon Hill's population is dominated by persons aged 15 to 35, who make up 60% of the residents, versus 35% for the city. Mobility is high: only 24% of the district population had been in the same unit five years or more in 1970, in contrast to 50% citywide. The proportion of all other age groups has declined from 1960 to 1970, with a particularly large loss (-27%) in the elderly population. Median incomes for families and for individuals are higher than city figures. Only 13% of the 3,959 families earn under \$5,000, versus 22% for the city.

There are 17,406 dwelling units in the district. Whereas about one third of the city's housing stock is in each of the 3-4 and 5-9 unit structures categories, two thirds of the housing in Back Bay-Beacon Hill is in 5-49 unit structures. The housing in Back Bay-Beacon Hill is older than the city's, with 80% built before 1940 versus 77% for the city. Most of the newer construction is in the Charles River Park and Prudential Center complexes, where all of the units are in structures of 50 units or more.

Most of the district's units (88%) are rented, while 5% are owner-occupied and 7% are vacant. The majority (73%) of the housing is occupied by one-person households. Fourteen percent of the population live in group quarters, a figure about three times the city-wide average.

## BACK BAY

The population of the Back Bay is predominantly young adults and students. In recent years there has been an influx of families with children, and with the consolidation of many of the small schools, the college-age population has leveled off and possibly even decreased. Nonetheless, over two-thirds of the population is between the ages of 15 and 35, versus 34% citywide, and the proportion of that age group increased from 1960 to 1970. Although the total population grew by 10% to 18,267, the percentages of all other age groups declined, most notably the elderly (-27%). Mobility in Back Bay is high, with only 12% of 1970 Census respondents having lived in the same units five years or longer, versus 50% for the city. The student influence is clear, with almost one-fourth of the population in group quarters. Median incomes for families and individuals are higher than Boston figures. Some 15% of the 1877 families, however, earn less than \$5,000 per year.

Housing in the Back Bay is predominantly a mix of quality apartment buildings, lodging houses and dormitories. To this supply was added in the late 1960's 781 luxury apartments in the Prudential Center complex. The recent growth in the conversion of apartments to condominiums took place after the 1970 Census, which shows owner occupancy at only 1%. By far the majority of Back Bay residents continue to be renters, nonetheless. The vacancy rate of 8% exceeded the city average of 6%. Over 85% of the non-group units are occupied by only one person, in contrast with 30% for the city. It is estimated that 28% of the subarea's housing stock needs repairs of over \$1,000.

## BEACON HILL

The population of the Beacon Hill subarea is a diverse one, with a high concentration of young working people and with most of the district's elderly residents. Demographics are generally more similar to those of the city as a whole than are those of the rest of the district, with no single age group dominating the statistics. The total number declined slightly (-2%) to 13,607 in 1970, with the proportion of elderly and children aged 0-14 also decreasing. Although most residents are unrelated individuals, there are proportionately far more families in this subarea than in Back Bay. Mobility, however, is still high, with 26% of the residents having lived in their same units five years or more, in contrast with 50% citywide. Both family and individual median incomes are considerably higher in Beacon Hill than in Boston overall, though the figures indicate that the area is less affluent than the Back Bay. Approximately 12% of the 2,082 families in the subarea earn under \$5,000 a year.

The housing stock on Beacon Hill consists of attached three- and four-story brick rowhouses in good or fair condition. Most have been converted to apartments. Vacancy rates parallel those of the city, but owner occupancy is only 8% (versus the Boston figure of 26%) and 86% of the units are renter-occupied. Group quarterings,



at 3%, is less prevalent than in the rest of the district and even slightly below the city wide figure. The percentage of units occupied by only one person is almost twice that of the city's. Approximately one-fourth of the dwelling units need substantial repairs, and these are generally on the north slope of the Hill.

The Charles River Park area adjacent to the Hill provides a contrast to the preceding description and accounts for an increase in the subarea's housing stock since 1950. Formerly the West End, the area contains 1,576 recently constructed housing rental units, including 1,426 in six luxury apartment towers and 150 units of elderly housing. Future housing development on this site is expected to consist of two additional apartment towers (710 units) and moderate-income housing on the Blackstone School site (176 units).

B. COMPARATIVE STATISTICS - BACK BAY-BEACON HILL

1970 U.S. Census Data

<u>Population</u>	<u>Beacon Hill</u>	<u>Back Bay</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>City</u>
Total 1970	13,607	18,267	31,874	639,803
Change from '60	-2%	+10%	+7%	-7%
Total Black 1970	279	478	757	104,429
% of Total	2%	3%	+2%	16%
Change from '60	+68%	+158%	+116%	+65%
Aged 15-24 years	3,657	8,843	12,500	137,858
% of Total	27%	48%	40%	22%
Change from '60	+41%	+42%	+42%	+36%
Aged 25-34 years	2,783	3,564	6,347	79,210
% of Total	20%	20%	20%	12%
Change from '60	+13%	+12%	+12%	-9%
Aged 65 yrs. & Over	1,435	1,907	3,342	81,437
% of Total	11%	21%	11%	13%
Change from '60	-35%	-19%	-27%	-4%
Families	2,082	1,877	3,959	142,019
<u>Income</u>				
Median Family	\$10,908- 18,574	\$ 9,584- 19,106	\$ 9,584- 19,106	\$ 9,133
Median Individual	\$ 4,524- 5,645	\$ 3,360- 7,023	\$ 3,360- 7,023	\$ 2,819
% Families under \$5,000	12%	13%	15%	22%
<u>Housing</u>				
Total Dwelling Units	7,891	9,515	17,406	232,400
Owner Occupied Units	613	362	850	59,178
%	8%	1%	5%	26%
Renter Occupied Units	6,810	8,410	15,522	158,257
%	86%	88%	88%	68%
Vacant Units	468	743	211	14,966
%	6%	8%	7%	6%
% 1-9 Unit Owner Occupied Structures	27%	10%	24%	54%



# COMPARATIVE STATISTICS - BACK BAY - BEACON HILL

1970 U.S. Census Data

<u>Housing</u>	<u>Beacon Hill</u>	<u>Back Bay</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>City</u>
Persons in Group Quarters %	416 3%	4,157 23%	4,573 14%	28,658 5%
Non-Group Units with One Person %	4,685 59%	7,429 85%	12,114 73%	69,939 30%
Person in Same Unit 5+ Years %	2,050 26%	2,154 12%	4,204 24%	294,797 50%
Units Needing Fix-up in Excess of \$1,000 %	1,588 23%	2,445 28%	4,033 26%	67,104 29%
Market Condition	Rising	Rising	Rising	Stable
Person per acre	_____	_____	43	20
Units per acre	_____	_____	25	7

### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Capital expenditures in the Back Bay-Beacon Hill District totaled \$7,472,065 from 1968 to 1974 exclusive of the major investment in lighting and one public library addition which was \$24,000,000. These monies went to the maintenance of the Boston Common (including construction of a children's play area) and the Public Garden, the reconstruction of several major thoroughfares (Cambridge, Boylston and Charles Streets) and improvements to the Copley Square area, including the renovation of the Copley Square high school and the Police Headquarters, the reconstruction of Copley Square Park and the library enlargement.

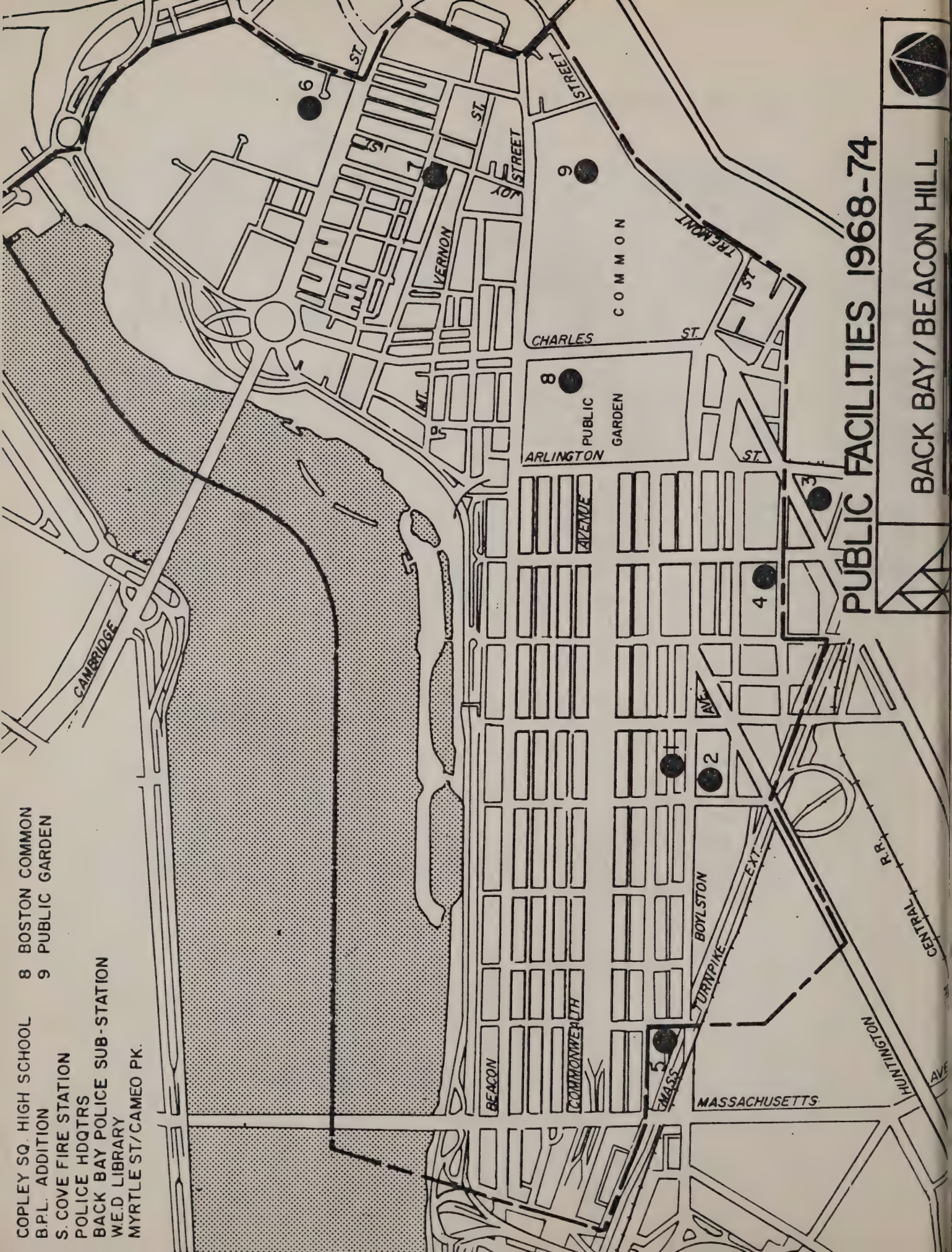
The bulk of expenditures for neighborhood amenities were for the renovation and construction of open spaces and street lighting. In addition to improvements to the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, a new mall was constructed on Dartmouth Street to serve Back Bay residents. Gaslights were installed along a portion of Marlborough Street. The Myrtle Street Cameo Park, one of a few open spaces on Beacon Hill, was rehabilitated. The residential streets and sidewalks of Beacon Hill were also substantially improved with the addition of gaslights, new sidewalks and trees as were the streets adjoining the Common and Public Garden. In addition, Beacon Hill and Charles River Park residents have benefited from the improvements to the West End Library and an \$18 million investment (2/3 Federal, 1/3 city) in the West End Renewal project.

### PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

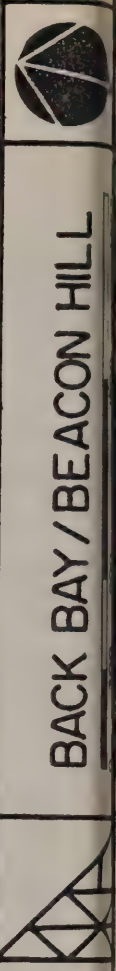
A review of building permits for construction activity in excess of \$10,000 from 1968 to 1974 shows that there has been residential, office, institutional and commercial investment, mostly in the form of rehabilitation. The largest expenditures were for office and residential use. Overall, in terms of permits issued, the greatest volume of work was in the residential rehabilitation (about one half of the permits issued). This work was concentrated for the most part in the north slope of Beacon Hill and in the eastern end of Back Bay. Institutional investment was concentrated in the West End, and most retail and office investment took place along Boylston Street.



- COPLEY SQ. HIGH SCHOOL
- B.P.L. ADDITION
- S. COVE FIRE STATION
- POLICE HDQTRS
- BACK BAY POLICE SUB-STATION
- W.E.D. LIBRARY
- MYRTLE ST/CAMEO PK.
- 8 BOSTON COMMON
- 9 PUBLIC GARDEN

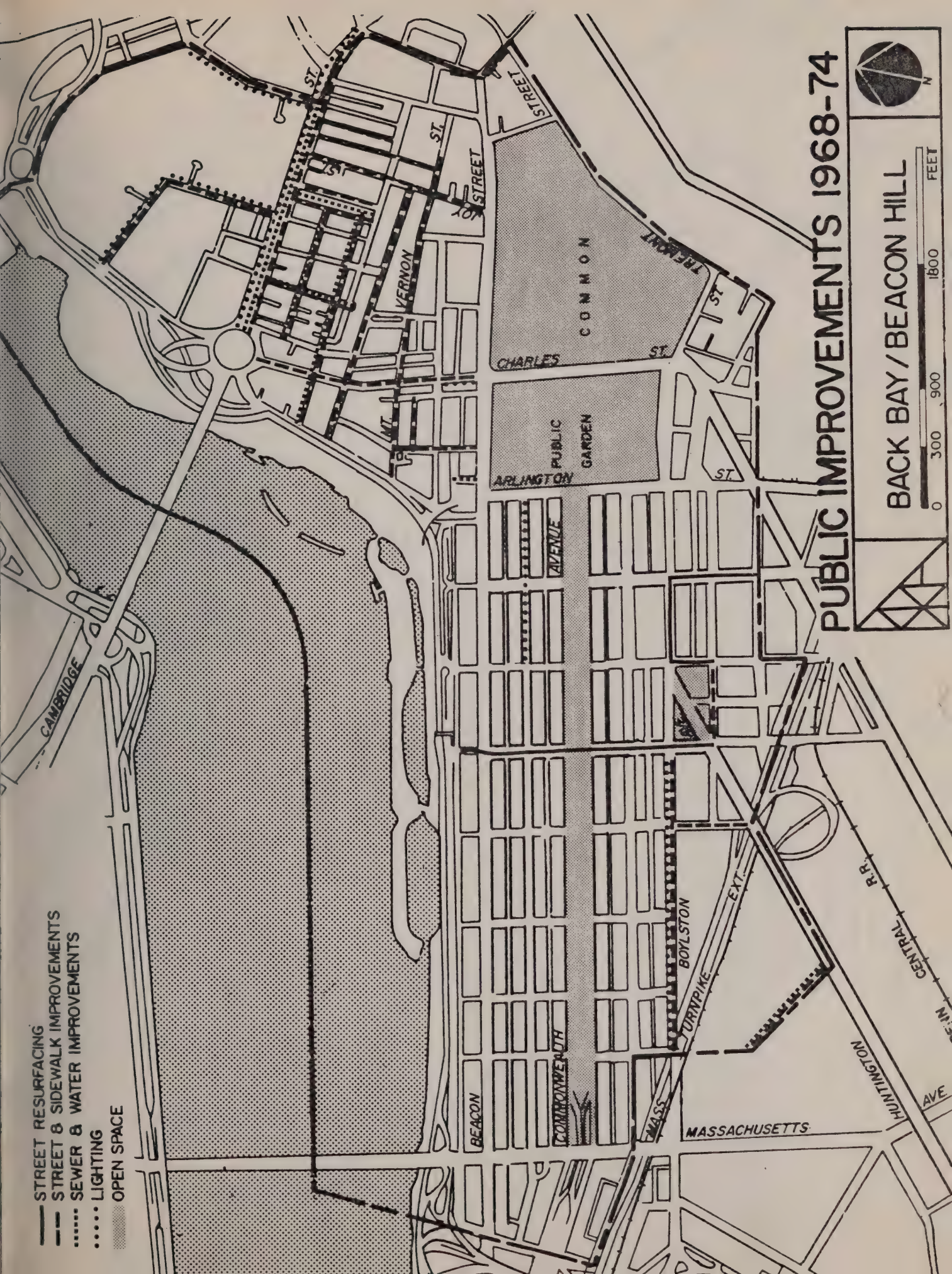


# PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74



BACK BAY / BEACON HILL



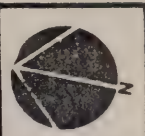


- STREET RESURFACING
- - STREET & SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS
- ..... SEWER & WATER IMPROVEMENTS
- . . . . LIGHTING
- OPEN SPACE

# PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1968-74

BACK BAY / BEACON HILL

0 300 900 1800 FEET



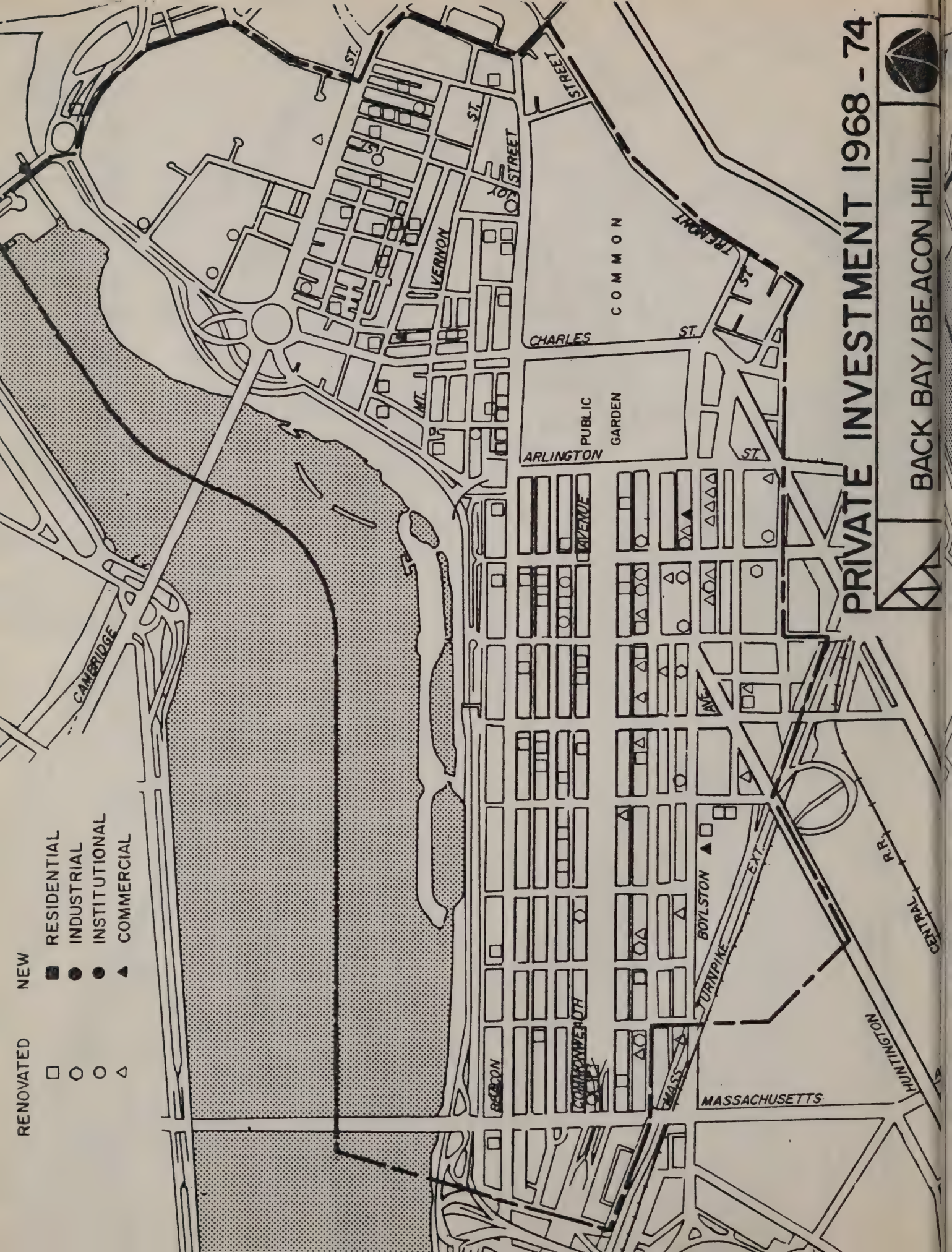


RENOVATED

NEW

- RESIDENTIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- INSTITUTIONAL
- COMMERCIAL

- 
- 
- 
- △



PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1968 - 74

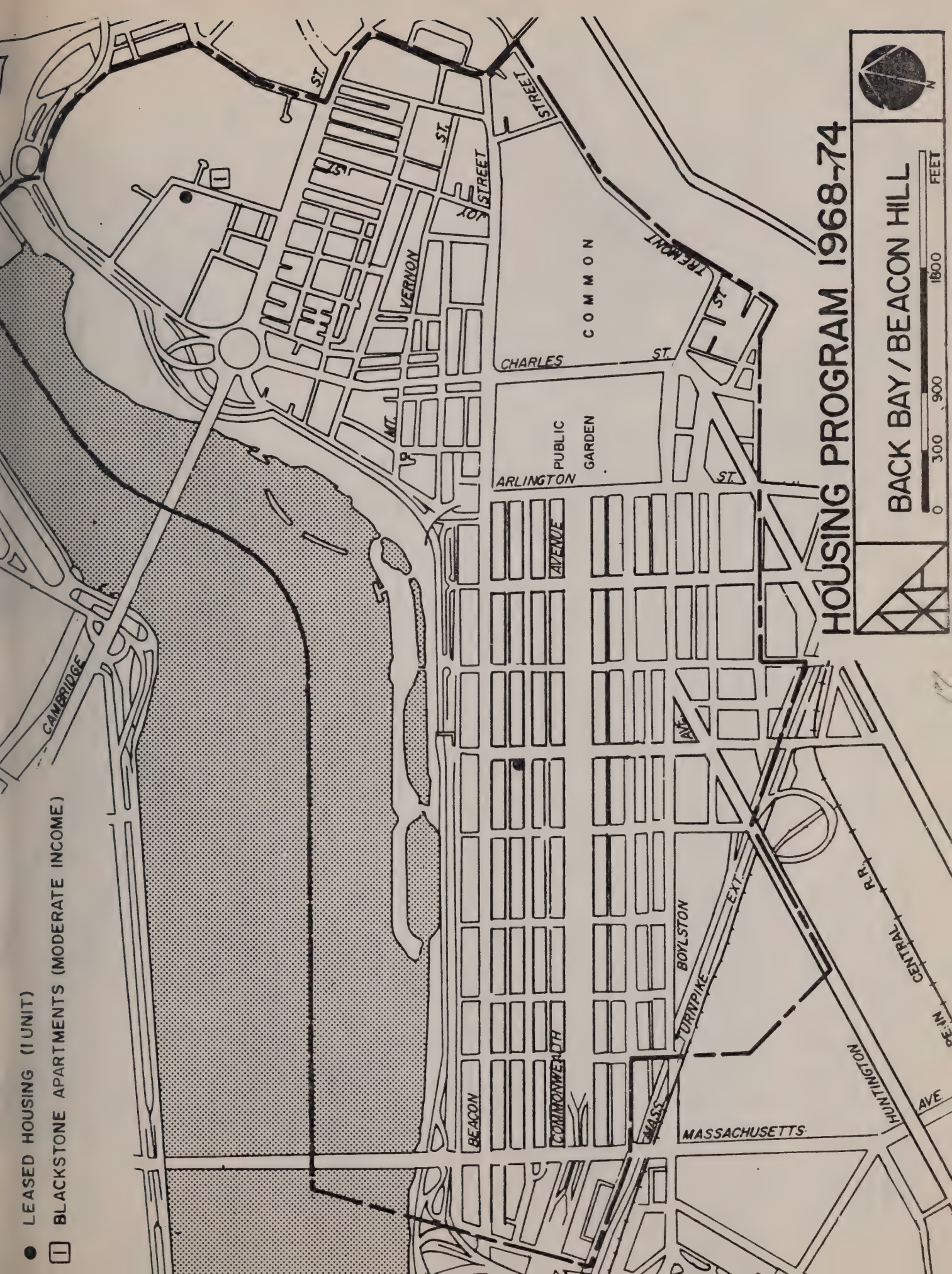
BACK BAY/BEACON HILL





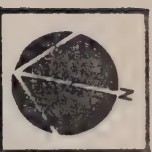
● LEASED HOUSING (1 UNIT)

□ BLACKSTONE APARTMENTS (MODERATE INCOME)



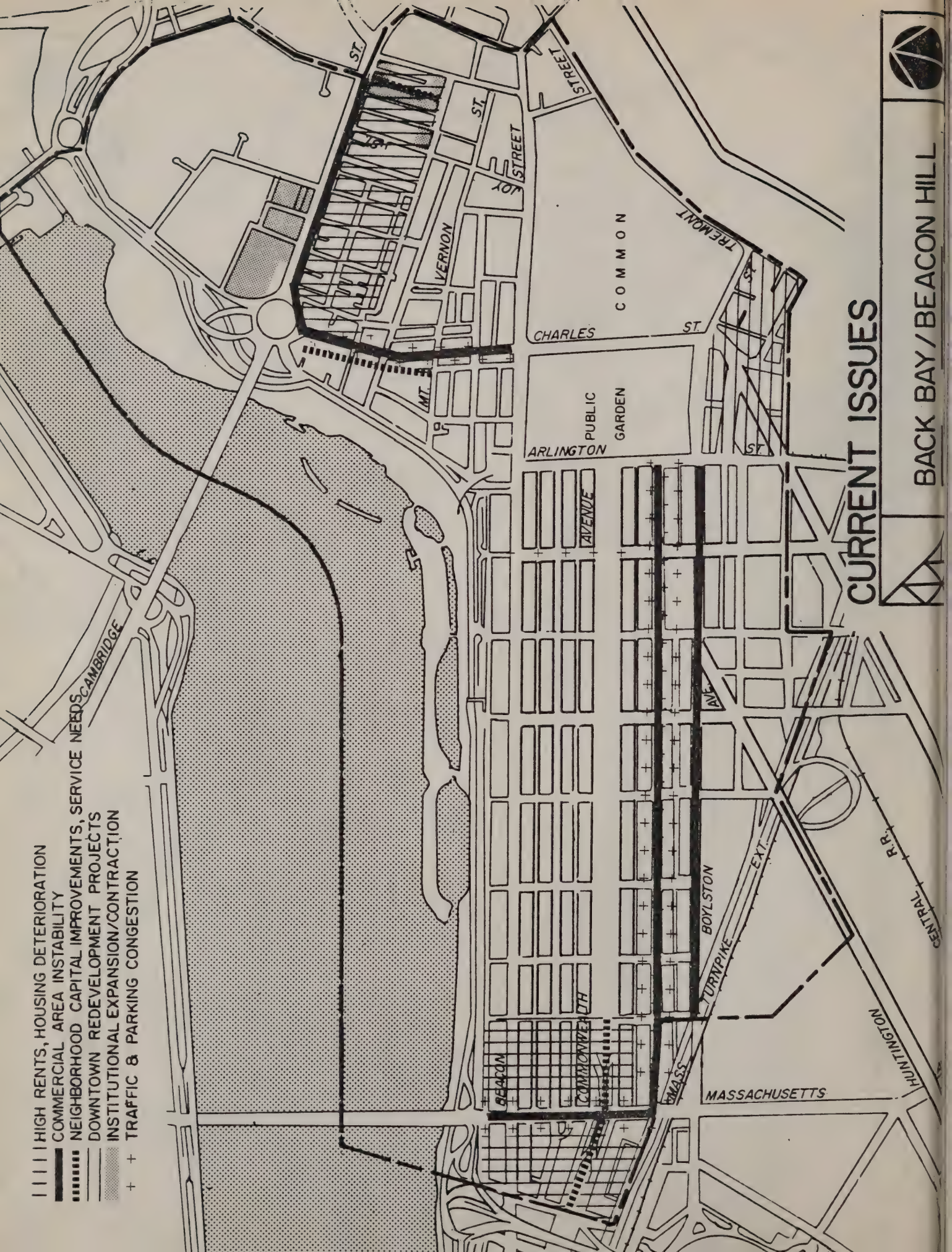
# HOUSING PROGRAM 1968-74

BACK BAY / BEACON HILL





- |||| HIGH RENTS, HOUSING DETERIORATION
- COMMERCIAL AREA INSTABILITY
- NEIGHBORHOOD CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS, SERVICE NEEDS
- DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS
- INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION/CONTRACTION
- + + TRAFFIC & PARKING CONGESTION



## CURRENT ISSUES

BACK BAY / BEACON HILL





#### D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

Currently two general problems face the Back Bay-Beacon Hill District: (1) how to continue to conserve historic residential neighborhoods in the downtown with the pressures of traffic flow, development and commercial area decline on the fringes of the neighborhoods, and (2) how to maintain a balance of population in these neighborhoods, including young and old, low-to-moderate-income families as well as single persons, owners and renters. The ramifications of these concerns are expressed by the following analysis of issues which affect the neighborhood.

##### 1. HIGH RENTS, HOUSING DETERIORATION

###### Issue

Rents in Back Bay-Beacon Hill are the highest of any district in the city. Where the dwelling units are in sound condition, these costs are justified. But where, on the other hand, there has been minimal investment in upgrading the dwelling units and where the tenants are of low or moderate income, this condition is often accompanied by deterioration and, a high rate of apartment turnover.

In both Back Bay and Beacon Hill, more than 75% of the low-income tenants and 25% of the moderate-income tenants pay in excess of 35% of their incomes for rent, in contrast to 68% and only 9% respectively for the city. This situation is compounded in areas where building conditions are poor such as along Massachusetts Avenue and the north slope of Beacon Hill. The city's Housing Inspection Department estimates that more than 25% of the dwelling units in Back Bay (2189) and 20% of the units in Beacon Hill (1287) require in excess of \$1000 to bring them up to code standards.

A significant amount of the housing deterioration in the district can be attributed to group quartering and lodging houses. There are approximately 100 dormitories and 180 rooming houses in the Back Bay. On the north slope of Beacon Hill, there are approximately 20 rooming houses. The 1970 Census indicated critical overcrowding throughout the Back Bay, a problem associated with dormitories and rooming houses. Additionally, while rooming houses generate a significant cash flow, there are no special efforts being made to see that they are properly maintained. As a consequence, this housing stock is in generally poorer condition than the owner occupied or apartment stock. A further problem is that a number of lodging houses are operating without either licenses or a valid occupancy permit from the building department. In the Massachusetts Avenue section along, it has been informally estimated by the B.R.A. that there are approximately 25 illegal lodging houses.



## Strategy

A study of lodging houses and dormitories should be instituted to determine the scope of the problem. The north slope and Massachusetts Avenue subareas are priority locations. This study should evaluate the extent of building deterioration and to the degree to which this condition correlates with lodging house and dormitory occupancy program strategies dealing with the occupancy and condition problems should then be prepared accompanied by additional efforts to encourage the preservation of historic buildings which are not easily renovated and to ensure a balance of age groups, owners and renters should also be undertaken. Such strategies would include the use of leased housing, expansion of the Housing Improvement Program and, if needed, changes in assessment and rent control policies to encourage more rehabilitation, owner occupancy and varied rent levels.

## 2. COMMERCIAL AREA INSTABILITY

### Issue

The two new commercial developments in Back Bay-Beacon Hill, Charles River Plaza and the Prudential Center Shopping Plaza, offer a good mix of stores, security and parking and have become the major shopping areas for residents. On the other hand, the older retail districts -- Massachusetts Avenue, Boylston, Newbury, Charles and Cambridge Streets -- lack such assets and have, in fact, been adversely impacted by the development of the new areas.

Restaurants are the predominant use on Boylston and Cambridge Streets. Litter, garish signs, traffic congestion and heavy transient pedestrian use result. An increase of restaurants particularly with liquor licenses, is likewise becoming a major issue on Newbury and Charles Streets. A related problem is the mix of businesses. While each area is somewhat unique, all suffer from the difficulty of preserving a viable mix of businesses which balance the needs of local residents with that of the tourist and transient population. Other problems which affect the older retail districts to varying degrees are the lack of promotional activities and environmental amenities; signs, raised sidewalks, inadequate enforcement of parking, sign and dog control regulations. These problems are particularly acute along Massachusetts Avenue.

### Strategy

A coordinated private/public capital investment program has been underway for some years. The city has made significant environmental improvements (lights, sidewalks, trees) along Boylston, Charles and Cambridge Streets. This public investment is just beginning to get underway on Newbury Street. Private investment to match these public efforts has varied

but is most obviously lacking on Charles Street. Cambridge Street, with the organization of the CSCDC, is the most significant private effort, geared to controlling development of this retail district. Similar efforts in Charles and Newbury Streets should be pursued.

It is imperative that a range of local and regional service and goods stores be provided. Promotional activities and a business development program would help improve the mix of businesses for all these retail districts.

Improved city services, the new foot patrol program, an increase in parking meter rates and concentrated sign control program for Boylston and Newbury Streets, have made a significant positive impact. Certain service and enforcement problems remain to be more clearly identified including dog control, parking enforcement and sanitation. These issues should be reviewed in all the retail areas and appropriate strategies developed. Efforts currently underway to up-grade the Massachusetts Avenue area should be continued.

A third strategy to upgrade these retail areas concerns regulation of activities and uses. Rooming houses, currently allowed in local and general business districts, might become a problem due to the softening of the office market on Newbury Street and the uneven retail climate on Charles Street. Since the potential exists for an increase in rooming houses, such a shift, if it does occur, should be closely monitored.

A second effort concerns traffic flow on Charles Street and on Newbury Street. The concept of a pedestrian mall in these locations, which are currently prone to congestion and double-parking, should be explored. Finally, liquor licenses in these retail districts has become a major concern in recent years. The granting of new or expanded licensing privileges should be a matter of city and community review. Licenses must not be approved on Newbury or Charles Streets except after appropriate conditions are agreed to. On Cambridge and Boylston Streets, licensing likewise should be subject to conditions that assure they will not negatively impact the areas.

### 3. NEIGHBORHOOD CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND SERVICE NEEDS

#### Issue

The majority of capital improvement expenditures in the 1968-1974 period in the Back Bay-Beacon Hill area were related to citywide facilities, public facilities and major thoroughfare improvements. The balance of the expenditures were for neighborhood-oriented improvements, such as the Dartmouth Street Mall and Beacon Hill lighting and sidewalks. In 1975 this situation has been reversed, with significant investments committed or planned for parks, patch paving, tree planting



and lighting. These non-citywide activities, have had a positive and highly visible impact on the district at a minimal cost to the city. Additional expenditures detailed below are of concern to the neighborhoods.

### Strategy

In order to continue the beneficial multiplier impacts of past city investment, high-priority capital improvement and for service expenditures are needed immediately. Four basic purposes will be achieved by this investment. First, activities now underway for which commitments have been made would be completed, namely, Commonwealth Avenue Mall, Temple Street Mall. Second, additional improvements will be provided at modest expense to the city to tie in with the private investment now underway: environmental improvements on Charles Street and Newbury Street. Third, as a result of deferred maintenance, other activities should be implemented: patch paving, purchase of alley-cleaning equipment, street resurfacing. Fourth, certain city services needs require additional attention including sanitation and dog control.

## 4. DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT IMPACTS

### Issue

Two large-scale redevelopment projects, Park Plaza and Jordan Marsh/Lafayette Place, are planned for the downtown. These projects, because of their location, scale, density and mix of uses, will have an impact on Back Bay and Beacon Hill.

Of priority concern is the increased traffic in the neighborhoods as a result of the widening and realignment of Charles Street and the creation of a pedestrian mall on Washington Street.

Second, relocation especially within the Park Plaza project, of commercial uses will have various impacts. While certain desirable uses, such as piano sales, might move in to existing retail areas, the potential relocation of various "combat zone" uses would be undesirable. Fortunately, entertainment establishments are now conditional uses along Boylston and Newbury Streets and forbidden along Charles Street. Additional establishments, such as car rental agencies, are of service to the residents as well as visitors, and their relocation out of the community would have a negative impact.

A third concern is the effect of the new developments will have on the Common and Garden. These are the only major city-owned open space areas downtown, and they are presently utilized to capacity for both active (tennis courts, baseball diamonds) and passive (sitting and walking area) use. Additional development increases the demand for these areas beyond reasonable limits.

Aesthetic considerations are a fourth major issue. Redevelopment activity will alter the skyline. The south slope of Beacon Hill, in particular, will be affected by the change in profile. Shadow, wind and micro-climate impacts are additional environmental considerations.

Lastly, of major concern is the degree to which these projects will affect the price of residential and commercial space. If the market area is broadened sufficiently and marketed sensitively, the overall effect on the community could be a positive result in stable or even lower vacancy rates. However, if the new development competes directly with existing dwelling units and stores, it could have a negative impact on the existing communities, increasing vacancies and encouraging lower paying uses.

### Strategy

The Park Plaza Civic Advisory Committee offers a useful forum for the Back Bay-Beacon Hill neighborhoods to represent their concerns over the potential impact of the Park Plaza project. These impacts are now the subject of analysis by the consultants preparing the Park Plaza Environmental Impact Statement. The report will be reviewed with the CAC and the community at large.

## 5. INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION/CONTRACTION

### Issue

A major issue affecting the residential quality of both Back Bay and Beacon Hill has been the impact of institutional expansion. In Beacon Hill, two major institutions, Suffolk University and the Massachusetts General Hospital, have been the major sources of friction. Suffolk University is located within Beacon Hill and the growth of this school has had a direct impact on the residential quality of the north slope. The acquisition of property with residential potential, the impact of students, noise, parking and traffic congestion are obvious. MGH, on the other hand, is situated in the periphery of Beacon Hill. The spillover effects of the hospital, while less than Suffolk University, likewise detract from the residential quality of Beacon Hill. In addition, of current concern is the possible plan to relocate the Charles Street jail thus making available a prime parcel for rehabilitation or redevelopment.

Institutional expansion in the Back Bay has been much more pervasive. The Back Bay, was developed as a luxury family residential area. As a result, the buildings were very spacious. With the Depression and a shift in life styles, it became increasingly difficult for families to maintain their structures; many were subdivided into apartments or utilized as rooming houses. This trend accelerated after World War II



and was accompanied by the use of these residences by various institutions, junior colleges, finishing schools, colleges as dormitories, classrooms and administrative offices. By the 1960's there were some 111 institutions (75% were educational) occupying all or portions of 184 buildings in the Back Bay. As the area was rapidly inundated with a transient population, students, young people and cars, the quality of the family residential environment eroded.

Several factors soon reversed this trend. A zoning amendment was passed in 1970 which made educational institutions conditional uses. Second, a zoning map amendment was adopted in 1971 which reduced the height limit to conform to the existing density. The pressure for speculation and redevelopment by educational institutions was diffused. Accompanying these changes was the growth in the condominium market: properties were subdivided, or existing apartments were converted into owner-occupied units.

The most important and most recent factor which checked the growth of educational institutions and assisted in the revitalization of the family residential environment has been the decline in the enrollments at most private educational institutions in the 1970's. This has forced two schools to close and seven to consolidate their holdings. As of 1975, there were some 30 educational institutional properties, mostly dormitories, for sale. The problem of educational institutions in Back Bay has thus shifted in focus: rather than checking continued growth, the issue has become one of monitoring the process of consolidations. The growth, on the other hand, of other types of institutions -- half-way houses for run-away teenagers, for example, and locations used by religious sects -- has provided an additional challenge in the neighborhood's attempts to preserve its residential quality.

### Strategy

Strategies to deal with institutional expansion differ within each neighborhood. In Beacon Hill the problem is more coherent. The formation of the CSCDC, which includes MGH, Suffolk University and the Beacon Hill Civic Association, has enabled the institutions and residential community to prepare a general concept plan to guide future change. Within the context of the goals of this plan, the various parties are beginning to outline on a parcel-by-parcel basis an agreed upon redevelopment program. Efforts currently are being directed at implementing a residential reuse of parcel 4-A and planning for the reuse of parcel 4-B, the former Stop & Shop property and the Charles Street Jail site.

In the Back Bay, a similar strategy might be required in the future. Efforts currently are being channeled into monitoring and affecting where necessary the shifts in institutional ownership and use. Institutional properties which are for sale are recorded by the Back Bay Federation. A joint effort on the part of the BRA and the Federation consists of monitoring these buildings on the market to ensure that the re-use is appropriate and to provide technical assistance, where possible and desirable the conversion to residential use is encouraged. An additional strategy which is used to monitor these changes in institutional property is the Board of Appeals since educational institutions, dormitories, half-way houses now are conditional uses in the Back Bay. The BRA, the Federation and the neighborhood must coordinate their efforts in reviewing these changes.

## 6. TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND PARKING INADEQUACY

### Issue

Beacon Hill and Back Bay, as residential neighborhoods in the downtown, share the goal of diverting through-traffic destined for the CBD from their neighborhoods. Beacon Hill has been working to confine through traffic to the peripheral streets of Cambridge, Bowdoin, Beacon and Charles; Back Bay has tried to keep through traffic on Storrow Drive, the Massachusetts Turnpike and Boylston Street.

Since these are high-density downtown neighborhoods, car ownership is lower than for the city as a whole. According to statistics compiled by the U.S. Census, 58% of Back Bay-Beacon Hill households had no cars in 1970, as opposed to 47% citywide. In the district, 43% of all workers walk to work and only 19% drive, contrasted with city figures of 15% walkers and 35% drivers.

Parking is nevertheless a continual problem because of the use of the local streets by commuters and shoppers, as well as residential cars. Illegally parked vehicles, especially on Beacon Hill, make emergency access and street cleaning a problem. Off-street parking in both areas is expensive and not convenient enough to an attractive alternative for residents, although the Boston Common, Massachusetts General Hospital and Prudential Center garages are used by some residents for monthly parking.

### Strategy

The traffic problems on Beacon Hill can be attacked on two major fronts. In the State House area, a study of circulation changes on Bowdoin, Somerset and Ashburton Streets is needed to determine ways of keeping traffic off interior streets.



Second, further study of the closing of Myrtle Street between Irving and South Russell Streets is necessary to prevent traffic from Storrow Drive crossing the hill on Revere, Myrtle and Joy Streets.

A mini-bus service for Beacon Hill has been studied involving the MGH, Government Center and Boston Common garages; in a second phase, this service would be expanded to include Back Bay. Implementation of these routes has been long in coming; thorough evaluation of the reasons for delay are necessary measures.

The parking strategy for Beacon Hill requires making off-street parking more accessible to residents and visitors, confining on-street parking to legal areas. The Beacon Hill Civic Association has made an effort to inform residents of the necessity of keeping corners and fire lanes free of parked cars. Signs are needed at some corners, and continued enforcement and towing are essential. Some new parking can be opened up on certain Beacon Hill Streets which are wide enough to accommodate parking on one side. Further, with the new State House garage, on-street parking reserved for legislators could be removed. A thorough study of parking regulations on the Hill is, therefore, in order.

In the Back Bay, the traffic strategies involve further definition of residential streets and better expressway access. A partial Newbury Street closing should be explored or tested to determine whether a pedestrian mall should be created. Although Newbury Street is not a major traffic carrier, it is important for service access and parking. The possibility of neckdowns at intersections on Marlborough Street should also be studied to further define its residential nature, and access to Storrow Drive at Arlington Street should be explored to see if alignment changes to alleviate the congestion would be feasible.

A new mini-bus route may be initiated in September 1975 to serve restaurants in the Back Bay and the Prudential garage. If this short route proves successful, the service could be expanded to connect stores and residences with the Prudential, Hancock, the St. James and Common garages.

Where possible, new development and rehabilitation of older buildings should provide off-street parking. The Back Bay Task Force recommended in 1970 the ration of one parking space to one dwelling unit for new construction and one space for every two units of rehabilitated units in buildings over three units. Such a change in the zoning ordinance should be studied, along with alternative plans for bus service to existing garages, possibly sponsored by developers of new buildings.

#### E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

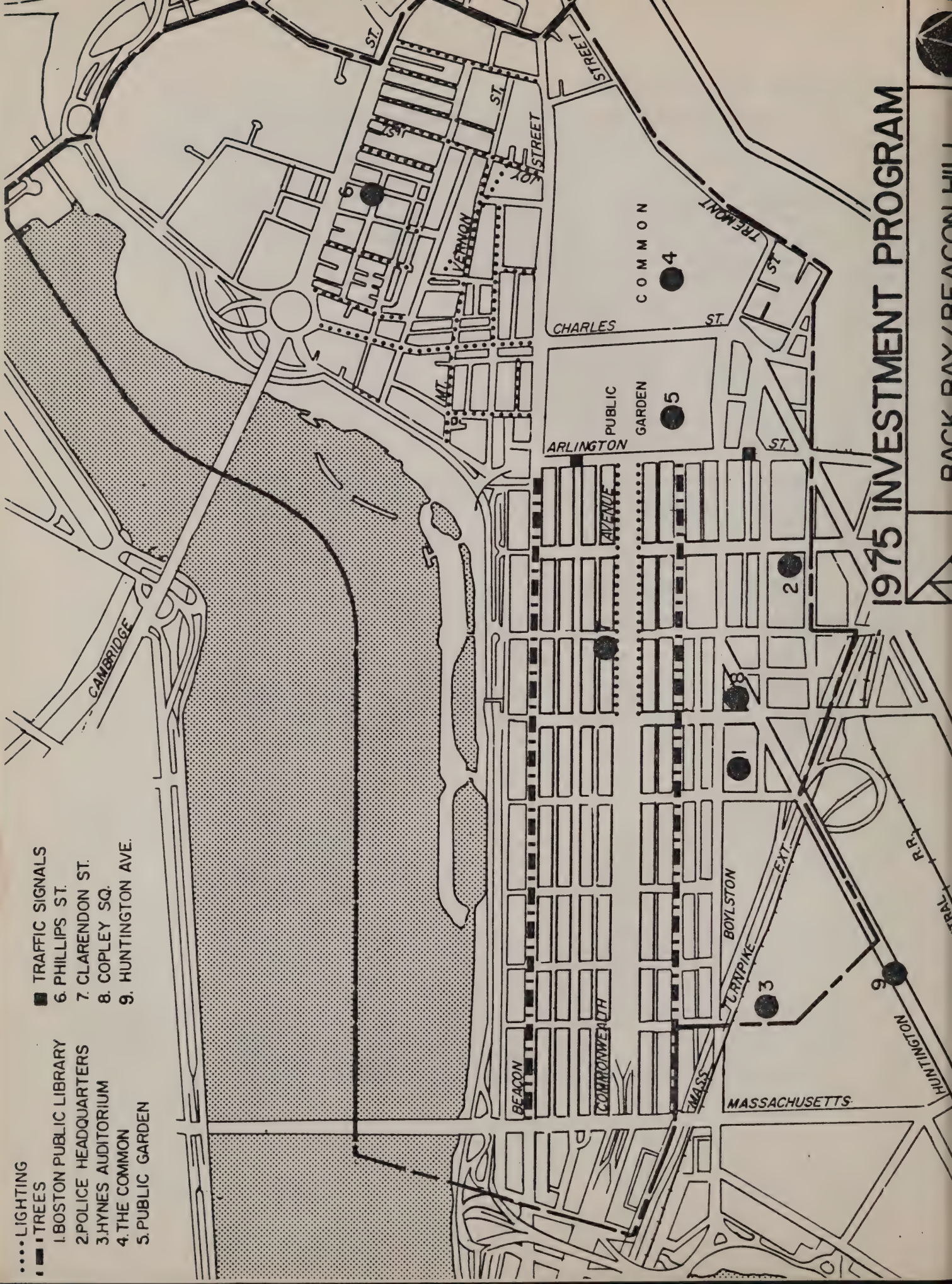
The 1975 public investment program focuses on environmental park and lighting improvements. Of the \$4,765,000 which will be spent in addition to \$4,000,000 for Huntington Avenue, 50% is allocated to parks. This sum includes monies for renovating the Boston Common (reconstruction of Parkman Plaza and Fountain, McArthur Mall and Brewer Fountain, construction of plazas such as S & S Monument, installation of decorative fencing, reconstructing of walks, tree planting), the Public Garden (restoration of decorative fence, main entrance gates, fountains, monument, walks and lawn, installation of decorative fencing and gates, construction of sitting area, lighting), the Phillips Street play area and Copley Square, in addition to acquisition of the Clarendon Street property. Other environmental improvements include tree planting, sidewalk patch paving and an information kiosk. The current lighting program includes the installation of special pedestrian lighting for Commonwealth Avenue (Arlington to Dartmouth Streets), and gaslights on Marlborough Street.

Housing preservation will be encouraged through the allocation of grant monies under the Housing Improvement Program for approximately 50 units.

Other improvements while of regional importance will also be of benefit to Back Bay-Beacon Hill. These include the TOPICS program for Huntington Avenue and renovation of the Copley Square Library, Hynes Auditorium and the Police Headquarters.

In summation, the 1975 investment program represents a new and major commitment by the city to fund neighborhood oriented improvements in Back Bay-Beacon Hill. This investment should be continued in the areas outlined on the following section in future investment needs.





.... LIGHTING  
- - - TREES

- 1. BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
- 2. POLICE HEADQUARTERS
- 3. HYNES AUDITORIUM
- 4. THE COMMON
- 5. PUBLIC GARDEN
- 6. PHILLIPS ST.
- 7. CLARENDON ST.
- 8. COPLEY SQ.
- 9. HUNTINGTON AVE.

# 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

BACK BAY / BEACON HILL



## F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

Future investment needs include an expansion of the current efforts relating to parks, lighting, environment and housing, and the initiation of investment to resolve problems concerning traffic and parking, commercial area uncertainty, outdated water and sewer mains and social service deficiencies. These investment needs require further analysis in order to estimate scope, cost and priorities. The funding of this program, furthermore, will have to be for the most part from the city's capital budget since the income levels of Beacon Hill-Back Bay are outside the low-moderate range targeted for the Community Development Revenue Sharing Program.

Housing Improvement in future years will require additional monies from the HIP program. The use of Section 8 financing in order to encourage the rehabilitation of units for low- and moderate-income households and the initiation of a code enforcement program targeted initially at lodging houses ought to be evaluated.

New pedestrian street lighting is required for Newbury and possibly Beacon Street. Park improvements -- the Commonwealth Avenue Mall from Gloucester Street to Charlesgate East, and the Temple Street Mall project -- also should be undertaken.

With regard to traffic and parking issues, with the exception of acquiring mini-buses, additional analysis is required to determine what improvements can and should be funded.

Commercial areas -- Charles, Boylston and Newbury Streets and Massachusetts Avenue -- need various forms of investment such as facade upgrading and tree planing. These amenities require a comprehensive plan and a staged implementation program.

Social services and water and sewer needs have not as yet been identified. Studies should be conducted to establish the scope of work which is required.



# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs	Yearly Planning Work Program
High Rents, Housing Deterioration	HIP	HIP - \$75,000 (50 structures)	HIP: minimum 100 units per year Section 8	
	Section 8 for rehabilitation and rental assistance to elderly and long term families			
	Neighborhood Associations			
	Policy Planning			
	Private efforts			
Commercial Area Instability				
Newbury Street Massachusetts Ave.	Public efforts	\$13,000 for patch paving 45 new trees	Facade rehab program, pedestrian lighting, tree stakes grates, trash containers	
Charles Street	Private efforts		Facade rehab program	
	Public Effort		Facade rehab program, Small Business Admin. Workshop	
Neighborhood Capital Improvement and Service Needs	Strengthen neighborhoods	Street Lighting for Beacon Hill, Commonwealth Ave, Marlboro St. (\$315,000) Information kiosk (\$6,000) Patch paving (\$13,000) Tree planting (\$13,000) Copley Square (\$60,000) Boston Common (\$1,500,000) Public Garden (\$1,604,000)	Newbury Street lighting, Beacon Street lighting. Patch paving, tree planting street resurfacing  Temple Street Mall Commonwealth Ave. Mall Street resurfacing	

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs	Yearly Planning Work Program
High Rents, Housing Deterioration	HIP	HIP - \$75,000 (50 structures)	HIP: minimum 100 units per year	
	Section 8 for rehabilitation and rental assistance to elderly and long term families		Section 8	
	Neighborhood Associations			
	Policy Planning			
	Private efforts			
Commercial Area Instability				
Newbury Street Massachusetts Ave.	Public efforts	\$13,000 for patch paving 45 new trees	Facade rehab program, pedestrian lighting, tree stakes grates, trash containers	
Charles Street	Private efforts		Facade rehab program	
	Public Effort		Facade rehab program, Small Business Admin. Workshop	
Neighborhood Capital Improvement and Service Needs	Strengthen neighborhoods	Street Lighting for Beacon Hill, Commonwealth Ave, Marlboro St. (\$315,000) Information kiosk (\$6,000) Patch paving (\$13,000) Tree planting (\$13,000) Copley Square (\$60,000) Boston Common (\$1,500,000) Public Garden (\$1,604,000)	Newbury Street lighting, Beacon Street lighting. Patch paving, tree planting street resurfacing Temple Street Mall Commonwealth Ave. Mall Street resurfacing	



FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs	Yearly Planning Work Program
Downtown Redevelopment Projects	Improve city services	Philips St. Playground (\$75,000) Boston Public Library (\$400,000) Police Headquarters (\$700,000) Hynes Auditorium (\$350,000)	Water & sewer reconstruction  CSCDC	
	New construction		School Renovation	
	Work with merchants neighborhood associations, L.A.G.		Expansion of dog control program, other services	
			New development	
Institutional Expansion/Contraction	Work with CSCDC Work with Suffolk University		Unknown Unknown	
	Monitor changes in Back Bay		Section 8 rehabilitation funds, housing monies	
Traffic Congestion	Roadway improvements	Huntington Ave from Prudential Center to Massachusetts Ave. (4,000,000)		
	Signal improvements Circulation changes	City traffic signal, Arlington St. to St. James Ave.. (\$4,500)	Unknown	
	Public transportation Mini-bus Parking		Mini-bus: Beacon Hill, Back Bay from under Common garage  Increase towing program	

M3/B16  
RA  
75/7

pt. 2

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS  
DEPARTMENT  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## CHARLESTOWN

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

Spring, 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.	SHORT HISTORY	[4]
B.	EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	[5]
	Town Hill/Monument	
	Thompson Square/Bunker Hill	
	Medford Street	
	The Neck	
C.	PAST PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT	[11]
D.	ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	[17]
	1. Housing Quality	
	2. Commercial Area Changes	
	3. Capital Investment Needs	
	4. Social Service Needs	
	5. Transportation problems	
	6. Major Potential Redevelopment	
E.	1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[24]
F.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS	
G.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies, and 1975 Investment Program	[29]





## INTRODUCTION

This report, prepared by the Charlestown district planners, is a draft document meant to form the basis of discussion among residents and city representatives on planning strategies and investment needs.

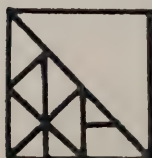
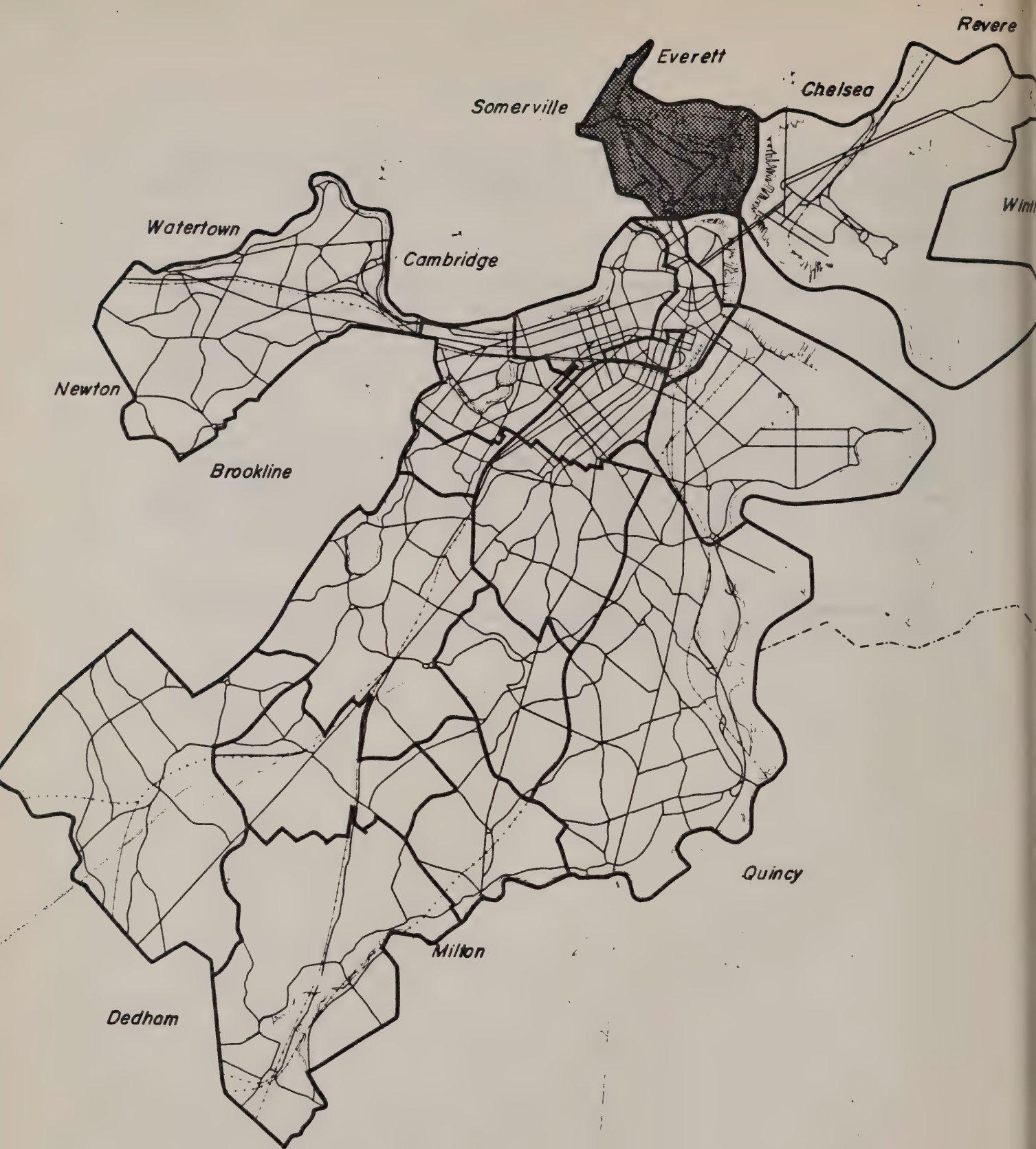
The report does a number of things:

First, it establishes a base of population, income and housing data as well as a listing and analysis of recent past public and private investment in Charlestown. This information can be used by the district planners and others who are involved in the planning process, neighborhood residents, Little City Hall staff and other city agencies and departments.

Second, it offers an analysis of the major issues which confront the community along with recommended strategies. These strategies should form the basis of discussion for community residents for the Community Development Block Grant and Capital Improvement participation process as well as for involvement in issues which are not addressed by city expenditures such as rezoning, private development and programs funded by the state.

Third, the report recognizes that strategies are not self-fulfilling and makes recommendations for investments, both public and private, which are necessary to help carry through the recommended strategies.





CHARLESTOWN



## A. SHORT HISTORY

Charlestown was settled before Boston in the early seventeenth century and developed separately from Boston until it was annexed in 1874. It was already a thriving harborside community by the time of the Revolution, during which the British burned the entire town in the 1775 Battle of Bunker Hill. The town was rebuilt, however, and once again flourished as a port. During the Golden Age of Sail, many wealthy captains and shipowners built grand houses for themselves and their families on the hillsides of Charlestown near the harbor. As the Boston Naval Shipyard was developed as the nation's second navy yard, a mixture of industry and port-related activities was established which continues to this day. The introduction of industry triggered the development of large sections of tenement housing for the workers. Most of this housing was built in areas removed from the Harbor.

During the period of great migration from Europe (especially from Ireland) in the late 1800's, and again around the time of World War I, these working class houses became the overcrowded first homes of many immigrants. Improved transportation connections with Boston, most notably the elevated transit line constructed at the beginning of the twentieth century, made Charlestown an even more attractive site for working class housing. At the same time many of the wealthy old Charlestown families moved out of the town to other areas.

The demand for ships generated by World War I increased activity at the shipyard, which in turn put new pressure on the existing housing stock. During this period many homes were converted to rooming houses to meet the demands of workers new to the town and crews stationed here while their ships were being repaired. The concentration of lower income immigrants, transient workers and sailors living in the town gave the neighborhood a rough and dangerous reputation. The Depression which followed the boom of wartime activity accelerated the process of deterioration caused by overcrowding and neglect. The population began a long decline which, except for another rooming house period during World War II, was not broken until the implementation of redevelopment under the Urban Renewal Program.

The Urban Renewal Plan began to be formulated in 1960 and was approved in 1965; implementation is now nearing completion. Originally, it was recommended that over half the dwelling units in Charlestown be demolished because of their deteriorated condition. Before the final plan was accepted, however, residents and planners revised the plan so that fewer than 600 dwelling units were demolished and the neighborhood's character and the majority of its structures have been preserved.



Since 1965, renewal activity and the availability of low interest rehabilitation loans and grants have attracted new residents to Charlestown, who have sought out and rehabilitated many of the fine houses which remain from the time when Charlestown was the home of ship captains and wealthy merchants. As a result, rents and sales prices have increased in certain areas of the town. Two housing markets actually exist; on the same street long time residents may rent apartments to other long time residents for \$70-\$90 per month, while newer neighbors may rent similar space which they have renovated for \$200 or more. Although most areas of Charlestown have experienced some of the influx of newer residents, the heaviest concentration is in the vicinity of the Bunker Hill Monument, Monument Avenue, and adjacent areas to the south and east.

B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Information on population and housing in this report was derived from the 1960 and 1970 U.S. Census. Four sub-areas of Charlestown have been designated for further analysis: Town Hill/Monument (1970 Census tracts 401 and 402), Thompson Square/Bunker Hill (403 and 404), Medford Street (405, 407 and 408), and the Neck (406).





# SUB-AREAS

## CHARLESTOWN



Comparative Statistics--Charlestown  
Census Data

<u>Population</u>	<u>Town Hill- Monument</u>	<u>Bunker Hill- Thompson Sq.</u>	<u>Medford St.</u>	<u>The Neck</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>City</u>
Total 1970	4,112	5,204	5,603	434	15,353	639,803
Change from 1960	-16%	-26%	-28%	-43%	-25%	-8%
Total Black 1970	40	4	32	0	76	104,206
Total Black 1960	3	2	29	2	36	63,165
65+years 1970	431	569	663	39	1,702	81,437
Change from 1960	-16%	-18%	+34%	-43%	-4%	-5%
Married Couples with children under 18						
1970	361	526	533	39	1,459	68,873
1960	506	681	651	91	1,929	83,101
Change from 1960	-28.7%	-22.8%	-18.1%	-57.1%	-24.4%	-17.1%
<u>Income</u>						
Median Family	\$6,952-11,522	\$8,612-8,956	\$6,196-10,100	\$7,406	\$6,196-11,999	\$9,000-11,522
% families less than \$5,000	23%	26%	18%	43%	29%	22%
<u>Housing</u>						
Total dwelling units	1,342	1,731	1,895	151	5,119	232,856
Units needing fix-up over \$1,000	529	654	1,042	48	2,273	67,102
Owner-Occupied units	28%	30%	32%	41%	30%	27%
Market condition	Strong	Stable	Stable	Moderate	Strong	Stable
People in same house over 5 years	57%	59%	62%	42%	59%	50%



### TOWN HILL/MONUMENT

The Town Hill/Monument area is the southern section of Charlestown. It includes City Square (the entrance to the town from Boston proper), the recently constructed Kent Community School, three historic parks (Bunker Hill Monument, John Harvard Mall, and the Training Field), and a portion of the Bunker Hill housing project. Residences in the area are predominantly three and four story brick row houses built in the nineteenth century. A group of residential streets (among the oldest in Boston) located in the southernmost portion of the area, known as Town Hill, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Town Hill/ Monument area has experienced the greatest influx of new residents in Charlestown; and many of the larger houses in the area, which had been converted into rooming houses during the periods of booming activity in the navy yard, are now being reconverted into one-, two- and three-family dwellings. Although a great deal of rehabilitation has taken place in the area since the inception of urban renewal, 529 dwelling units (more than a third of the area's total) required over \$1,000 fix-up in 1973. Rehabilitation activity has been steadily continuing since then, however, and is expected to increase after the elevated line is removed from Main Street and City Square is redesigned. In 1970, 28% of the area's dwelling units were owner-occupied, a proportion close to that of both the Charlestown district and the city as a whole. While the district as a whole lost a quarter of its population between 1960 and 1970, the Town Hill/Monument area experienced a 16% decrease, the lowest percentage of population decrease in the town. 57% of the people living in the area in 1970 had lived in the same residence for five or more years; this percentage is higher than that for the city as a whole; but slightly less than the district-wide percentage of 58%. Although this section has the highest median income in the town (\$6,952-11,522), 23% of its families had incomes under \$5,000 in 1970. This statistic may be explained in part by the fact that the area includes a section of the low-income Bunker Hill housing project. Despite the influx of new residents, the area continues to house many long-time residents and roomers.

### THOMPSON SQUARE/BUNKER HILL

The Thompson Square/Bunker Hill area is centrally located in the town, to the west of the Town Hill/Monument area. It includes the traditional center of commercial activity in Charlestown as well as the site for the new shopping center, the Bunker Hill Community College, the new library, the MDC skating rink, a section of the Bunker Hill housing project, and the recently completed low and moderate income 236 housing development, Mishawum Park (not occupied during 1970 Census). The area has the highest percentage (65%) in the district of single and two-family dwellings. Most of the residences are two-, three- or four-story row houses, predominantly brick in the southwestern portion and wood frame in the northeastern portion. Although the majority of buildings in the area are in good or fair condition, some in the immediate vicinity

of the Bunker Hill housing project show signs of deterioration. A survey indicates that 654 dwelling units (over a third of the area's total) required fix-up over \$1,000 in 1973. The dismantling of the Elevated on Main Street and the continued availability of rehabilitation assistance are expected to spur an increase of both commercial and residential rehabilitation activity. The area shows signs of residential stability; 30% of the dwelling units are owner-occupied, and 59% of the people living in the area have resided in the same house for five or more years. The median income for the area (\$8,612-8,956) is about average for the district. 26% of the area's families had incomes under \$5,000; this includes a section of the Bunker Hill housing project. The area, like the district as a whole, lost about a quarter of its population between 1960 and 1970. The area has experienced slightly less of the influx of new residents than the Town Hill/Monument area, and continues to be predominantly working class families.

#### MEDFORD STREET

The Medford Street area is the northernmost section of Charlestown. It includes the Naval Shipyard, a variety of industrial and port-related uses (including Boston's primary containerport), Sullivan Square, two major playgrounds (Ryan and Doherty), most of the Bunker Hill housing project, and the recently completed Charles Newtowne 236 housing development (only partially occupied during 1970 Census). Outside of these housing developments, the area's residences are predominantly two- and three-family wood row houses. The majority of these structures are in fair or poor condition, with evidence of deterioration concentrated in the vicinity of the Bunker Hill housing project. Approximately 55% of the area's dwelling units required fix-up over \$1,000 in 1973. Despite these conditions, the area shows strong signs of residential stability; 32% of the dwelling units are owner-occupied, and 62% of the people living in the area have resided in the same house for five or more years. 41% of the area's dwelling units are in one- or two-family houses. Some of the older houses show signs of new investment, and several new single family dwellings have been built in the area on land assembled by the city's urban renewal program. The area experienced a 28% decrease in population between 1960 and 1970, compared with the district-wide decrease of 25%. The median family income for the area is \$6,196-10,100, ranging from low to fairly high compared with the district as a whole. This area has the lowest percentage (18%) of families with incomes under \$5,000, however; the comparable district-wide percentage is 29%. The area has a stable housing market and has retained its character of a working class family neighborhood.

#### THE NECK

The Neck area is the extreme western section of Charlestown, physically separated from the rest of the town by Rutherford Avenue (a major arterial road) and Sullivan Square. It includes some industrial land, some automobile-oriented commercial development



along Cambridge Street, and a very small residential neighborhood. The dominant housing type is detached frame one- and two-family houses, which include 49% of the area's dwelling units; there are also a few six-unit apartment structures and several three-family houses. The majority of the area's housing is well-maintained and in fair condition; 48 units (less than a third of the neighborhood's total) required fix-up over \$1,000 in 1973. Because the Neck was not included in the urban renewal project boundaries, it has not been eligible for federal rehabilitation assistance. The Neck has a relatively high proportion of owner-occupied units (41%), and 42% of the area's population have lived in the same unit for five or more years. The area has what might be called a moderate housing market, with no significant increase in resale values or rent levels in recent years. The Neck has a low median income of \$7,406 and an extremely high proportion (43%) of families with incomes less than \$5,000. The area experienced a dramatic 43% loss of population between 1960 and 1970, due in large part to demolition of many of its residential structures necessitated by construction of the new Sullivan Square terminal and Orange Line.

### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Capital expenditures in Charlestown have increased markedly since the inception of the urban renewal program. Although the renewal plan was approved in 1965, the great bulk of capital expenditures has been made since 1968. Over \$1,000,000 was spent on necessary demolition work; and between 1968 and 1974, the BRA and city departments made a combined total of over \$18,000,000 in capital investment in the town. Much of this total amount was spent on needed infrastructure improvements. Approximately \$5,300,000 has been spent on street and sidewalk reconstruction, \$275,000 on street resurfacing, \$3,370,000 sewer replacement, \$2,000,000 on new water lines, and over \$770,000 on street lighting. In addition to these improvements, almost \$7,000,000 has been spent on public facilities and the construction and improvement of recreational facilities. New construction includes the Kent Community School, the Charlestown Library, the Charlestown Fire Station near Sullivan Square, the Doherty Pool, and the McCarthy Playground. Improvements have been made to the Barry, Doherty, and Ryan Playgrounds, as well as to the District 15 Police Station.

Public investment in housing in Charlestown has been in three forms: the leased housing program, new construction, and federally-assisted rehabilitation. There are 98 leased housing units in Charlestown; 80 are located in the recently constructed Charles Newtowne development, and 18 units are scattered throughout the district. Two major housing developments subsidized under the federal 236 program have been constructed in Charlestown in recent years: Mishawum Park, which includes 337 units, and Charles Newtowne, which includes 182 units in addition to the 80 units that are now leased housing. The Boston Housing Authority has constructed 96 units of elderly housing in low density structures scattered throughout the town. These new housing developments provide good, attractive housing for middle income families and elderly individuals. In addition, the BRA sold cleared land within renewal boundaries to private developers, who have constructed 38 units of market housing. As an urban renewal area, Charlestown became eligible for federal rehabilitation loans and grants. Over \$7,000,000 of public funds have been expended under this program in Charlestown, resulting in the rehabilitation of 811 residential and mixed residential/commercial structures, a total of 1,525 housing units. The public funds spent on housing rehabilitation represent only a fraction of the total investment triggered by these programs. Public investment in Charlestown has helped to reverse the trend of deterioration and to restore the neighborhood's attractiveness and "livability."





- SOMERVILLE
1. KENT COMMUNITY SCHOOL
  2. DISTRICT 15 POLICE STATION
  3. CHARLESTOWN LIBRARY
  4. DOHERTY POOL
  5. FIRE STATION
  6. BARRY PLGD.
  7. MCCARTHY PLGD.
  8. DOHERTY PLGD.
  9. RYAN PLGD.

PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74

CHARLESTOWN





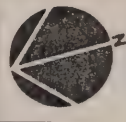


SOMERVILLE

- STREET RESURFACING
- - STREET & SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS
- ..... SEWER & WATER
- ..... LIGHTING

# PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1968-74

## CHARLESTOWN

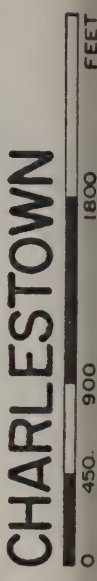






# HOUSING PROGRAMS 1968-74

CHARLESTOWN



- SOMERVILLE
- 312, 115 REHAB
  - NEW CONSTRUCTION
  - LEASED HOUSING (1-4 UNITS)
  - △ LEASED HOUSING (5-19 UNITS)
  - ▲ LEASED HOUSING (20+ UNITS)

## PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

A review of building permits for construction activity in excess of \$10,000 from 1968-74 shows evidence of commercial and residential investment in Charlestown. Most of this investment has been in residential buildings. Aside from a cluster of new residences on Austin Street, the majority of new residential construction has taken place in the Medford Street area, along side streets intersecting Main and Bunker Hill Streets. Most of the residential rehabilitations and conversions, on the other hand, have occurred in the Town Hill/Monument area and along Main Street opposite Mishawum Park. The only instance of new commercial construction which appears in the building permits is on Rutherford Avenue near Sullivan Square. The four commercial rehabilitations which appear are scattered throughout the district.





# PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

## CHARLESTOWN





## D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

### 1. HOUSING QUALITY

#### Issues

Although many residential structures have been rehabilitated since 1968 as a result of urban renewal activity and the availability of federal loans and grants, there is still a great need for rehabilitation assistance in Charlestown. Close to half of the town's dwelling units required fix-up exceeding \$1000 in 1973. Because of rising costs, some Charlestown homeowners have been unable to make necessary repairs to their property, despite the availability of loans and grants and incentives offered by the Mayor's Housing Improvement Program. Those who are financially able to rehabilitate their houses require expert technical assistance to ensure that serious structural problems and code violations are corrected and that the work enhances rather than obscures the buildings' historic and architectural character. The Bunker Hill housing project, which is in deteriorated condition and frequently subject to vandalism, exerts an influence on surrounding housing which discourages rehabilitation activity.

Because of its nearness to downtown, attractive settings and well-built housing, Charlestown overall is experiencing a shortage of sellers rather than buyers; and resale values and rent levels have been rising more rapidly than in most communities in the metropolitan area. This phenomenon is creating a problem in rental housing. Because of higher monthly costs, such as mortgage and tax payments, incurred when property changes hands, some new owners find it impossible to maintain low rents and existing tenants may be forced out. An important issue is how to preserve Charlestown's housing stock without losing the neighborhood's long-time residents.

#### Strategy

Public assistance is required in order for existing homeowners to rehabilitate their houses. The continued availability of federal rehabilitation loans and grants together with the cash rebate offered by the Housing Improvement Program should provide necessary financial help for many Charlestown residents. These programs also provide much needed technical assistance to direct rehabilitation effort toward correcting serious structural problems and code violations, to advise homeowners on dealing with contractors or making repairs themselves, and to suggest ways that houses can be economically rehabilitated to enhance their basic historic or architectural character. A strong public information effort is needed so that Charlestown residents become aware of the availability and the details of these programs, including the fact that participation will not subject them to property reassessment. At least initially, these efforts should be concentrated in the Neck area, which has not been eligible for federal rehabilitation assistance.



For some homeowners, the financial assistance offered by federal loans and HIP is not sufficient and a deeper rehabilitation subsidy is required. In addition, major public investment is required to rehabilitate the deteriorated Bunker Hill housing project and facilitate maintenance in the future.

## 2. COMMERCIAL AREA CHANGES

### Issues

Because of loss of population, competition with outlying shopping centers, the blighting influence of the elevated transit line on Main Street, and the threat of vandalism and robbery, the commercial areas of Charlestown have declined. In the Thompson Square area and on Bunker Hill Street, retail and service establishments have been physically abandoned and boarded up. Although there is need for neighborhood commercial establishments in Charlestown, many residents view Thompson Square and Bunker Hill Street as unattractive and unsafe places to shop. The issue is how to improve these areas and their image in the community so that Charlestown can have again thriving commercial areas which serve the neighborhood's needs.

### Strategy

A combination of public and private effort is needed to revitalize the commercial areas of Charlestown. Demolition of the elevated, construction of the new shopping center, and the initiation of the police foot patrol program in 1975 are major steps; but public investment is still required to improve the safety and attractiveness of Main and Bunker Hill Streets. Streets and sidewalks in these areas should be reconstructed, trees should be planted, and street lights and street furniture (e.g. - benches, trash barrels) should be installed. If found to be effective, the police foot patrol program should be continued and expanded, and other means of improving safety should be explored. The city should also work with local business associations to set up a storefront rehabilitation program.

## 3. CAPITAL INVESTMENT NEEDS

### Issues

As approved in 1965, the Urban Renewal Plan for Charlestown called for reconstruction of almost all streets within the project boundaries and construction of a number of new public facilities. Although a lot of work has been done to date, many streets have yet to be done and a number of public facilities (including the new high school, a new elementary school and a new fire station) have yet to be built.

Despite recent investment, many of the parks and recreational facilities in Charlestown are poorly maintained and in bad repair. The need for better lighting, rehabilitation of facilities and general landscaping and restoration work is obvious in the neighborhood's playgrounds as well as in historic parks and cemeteries which will be visited by tourists. There is currently a shortage of usable open space and active recreational facilities in the vicinity of Charles Newtowne and the Bunker Hill housing project. Residents have expressed the need for more play areas for small children, for active recreational facilities (specifically tennis courts) for adults and for more passive facilities to service the elderly. Residents are also concerned that they are unable to enjoy Charlestown's extensive waterfront, because of lack of safe pedestrian access and recreation land along the water.

Because of demolition work and occasional fires, there are a lot of vacant lots in Charlestown. Many of these are not maintained and are eyesores and safety hazards for the community.

### Strategy

Charlestown's capital investment needs, as outlined above, must be met if the goal of restoring residents' confidence is to be fully achieved. Many capital improvements are scheduled for 1975, including street and sidewalk reconstruction, tree planting and installation of street lights, construction of the high school complex, assembly of land for the new elementary school, restoration of vacant lots, and improvements to several existing playgrounds. The coordinated effort of the BRA, PFD, Little City Hall and the Parks and Recreation Department is necessary to ensure that remaining capital investments (including residential street improvements, new fire station, new elementary school, restoration of vacant lots, improvements to existing recreational facilities, and construction of Little Mystic Playground and other new recreational facilities) will be made and that existing and new facilities will be properly maintained in the future.

## 4. SOCIAL SERVICE NEEDS

### Issues

The youth in Charlestown have special needs, which have not been adequately served by existing facilities or programs. A comprehensive and coordinated system of public and private effort is required to identify and meet those needs. The elderly have special service needs too. Although some of their needs are met by local agencies, others, notably a safe and convenient means of getting around town, cannot currently be met without public assistance.



## Strategy

The 1975 investment program includes purchase of a mini-bus to be operated by the Kent Community School for elderly transportation. If this project is successful, it should be continued and if necessary expanded in the future. The city, through its Little City Hall and planning department, should be aware of service needs in Charlestown and should offer assistance to community groups in planning and securing funding for service programs and facilities.

### 5. TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS

#### Issues

Several major highways, including I-93, the central artery and the Tobin Bridge, run along the periphery of the community. For the most part, these improvements serve suburban commuters and through traffic rather than residents and workers of Charlestown. The expressways have caused problems of noise and air pollution. Construction of the Tobin Bridge in the 1950's caused Chelsea Street to be severed and the low level bridge which crossed the Little Mystic Channel to be demolished. Because of these changes and the awkward and hazardous artery ramps, trucks are forced to use residential streets such as Lowney Way and Medford Street. Traffic congestion is a problem on Main Street, where cars must weave their way through the supports of the elevated structure, and in City Square, where local and through-traffic intermingle with a minimum of control. These areas are hazardous for pedestrians and motorists alike.

Additional problems have been created by the relocation of the Orange line, which while a blighting influence provided good rapid transit service for community residents. Transit service is now being provided primarily by buses which, unlike rail transit, are subject to traffic congestion and severe delay during peak hours. A major issue is how to ease the transition from rail transit to buses and to provide safe, convenient and quick transit service for the Charlestown community.

#### Strategy

The city must provide improved truck access to industrial areas in order to remove truck traffic from residential streets. A proposed pair of transportation improvements, the Water/Chelsea Streets connector and Little Mystic Bridge, are currently being studied under a contract jointly sponsored by BRA and Massport. The city should be prepared to contribute its share of funding to implement these improvements if they are deemed to be feasible. Some traffic and parking improvements are being made in 1975 to ease congestion in Charlestown. Major effort is still required to redesign City Square; the confusion and congestion at this intersection is expected to worsen when the elevated structure is removed. Additional planning and public effort are required to improve pedestrian access and safety in the town. In order to assure good transit service for people who live and work in Charlestown, the city should work with the community and the MBTA on bus routes and schedules; exclusive bus lanes and passenger loading platforms are now being studied.

## 6. MAJOR POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT

### Issues

Three sites in Charlestown have the potential for major redevelopment: the Navy Yard, Sullivan Square, and the land north of the Little Mystic Channel. The Navy Yard, which includes approximately 84 acres of land and 46 acres of water as well as many buildings of historical and architectural importance, was officially closed in the spring of 1973. Since then, the National Park Service has acquired the westernmost 26 acres as one of seven sites to be included in the Boston National Historic Park. The BRA and the Boston Economic Development and Industrial Commission have been working together along with a local task force to produce realistic proposals for reusing the remainder of the yard and to interest potential redevelopers. Proposals which have been considered to date include industrial, residential, commercial, institutional and recreational uses.

The old Sullivan Square transit terminal and some of the surrounding land owned by the MBTA are no longer being used because of the relocation of the Orange Line and construction of the new terminal. Although the MBTA has plans to develop part of the site for a new bus garage and related facilities, some land may be available for redevelopment. Interest in the site has been expressed by the Parks and Recreation Department, the Public Facilities Department, a local special service agency and individuals in the community. Special problems in reusing the site include traffic congestion, lack of pedestrian access, and distance from the residential community.

The area north of the Little Mystic Channel includes a variety of industrial and port-related uses, Boston's primary container-port, and some land owned by the Penn-Central Railroad. The Penn-Central land is currently under-utilized, and Massport has expressed interest in expanding its container facilities. Expansion of containerized shipping on this site and other sites in Boston has been under study by the BRA. Special problems in expanding development in this area include inadequate access for automobiles and trucks.

### Strategy

All three of these sites present exciting long-range potential for redevelopment. The issue is to produce and promote sound redevelopment proposals which will benefit Charlestown and the City of Boston as a whole, with careful planning to solve special problems and avoid disruption of the community. The BRA should continue its coordinated effort with EDIC and the



resident task force on reuse proposals for the Navy Yard. The planning department should take the initiative to study and develop a master plan for the Sullivan Square MBTA lands while continuing to meet with interested groups and individuals from the community and public agencies. Working with Massport and a local task force (not yet formally established), planners should carefully review the containerport expansion proposal and assess related costs and benefits to Charlestown and the city as a whole. Any plans for this area should incorporate community needs and practical planning considerations.

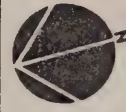


SOMERVILLE

- DETERIORATED HOUSING PROJECT
- ▨ COMMERCIAL AREA NEEDS
- ..... TRUCK TRAFFIC ON RESIDENTIAL STREETS
- == TRAFFIC CONGESTION
- MAJOR REDEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL
- 1. NAVY YARD
- 2. SULLIVAN SQ.
- 3. MYSTIC CHANNEL AREA

# CURRENT ISSUES

## CHARLESTOWN





## E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1975 program in Charlestown includes a wide range of investments utilizing city, state and federal resources. A major component of the 1975 investment program for housing is the Housing Improvement Program, which provides financial incentives and technical assistance for the rehabilitation of owner-occupied residential structures with 1-6 units. A site office for the administration of this program will be established in Charlestown, and funds have been reserved for the rehabilitation of approximately 100 buildings. Although the entire district is included in the program, effort will be made to target the Neck area, which has been ineligible for federal rehabilitation loans and grants. Some federal funds will continue to be available in 1975 for rehabilitation loans and grants within the renewal project boundaries. In addition, the BRA is scheduled to assemble parcels of land for new private residential development.

Included in the investment program for commercial area improvements is the assembly and disposition of parcels for new commercial development. The police foot patrol program, initiated in 1975, should help to improve safety of the commercial areas in the minds of merchants and customers alike. In addition, construction of the new shopping center at Thompson Square and the previously funded demolition of the elevated on Main Street should get underway in 1975. The combination of these improvements is expected to spur commercial rehabilitation and development in Charlestown, especially along Main Street.

Residential street work is a major component of the 1975 capital improvement program. A portion or the entire length of 38 streets in Charlestown will undergo street and sidewalk reconstruction or resurfacing, separation of storm and sanitary drainage systems, tree planting and the installation of street lights. Although planning work on the new Bunker Hill Elementary School has been delayed because of judicial review, during 1975 the BRA will assemble the necessary parcels to be conveyed to the Public Facilities Department. PFD will undertake construction of the new Charlestown High School complex, including the athletic facility already under construction. In addition, the city will do restoration work, including landscaping, tree planting and lighting, to the Doherty Playground, the Ryan Playground, the Phipps Street Cemetery and the John Harvard Mall. Plans for the mall, which were revised in accordance with community wishes, concentrate improvements in the upper portion along Harvard Street and include an active play area for children. During 1975 the city will also build two tennis courts on a site within the residential neighborhood.

The 1975 investment program for traffic and parking improvements includes assembly and disposition of parcels for City Square improvements and provision of parking for visitors to the Boston National Historic Park, as well as funds for building a pedestrian bridge over Rutherford Avenue at Austin Street. In addition, the BRA and Massport are jointly funding the environmental impact statement and preliminary design work for the proposed Little Mystic Bridge and Water/Chelsea Streets connector. This pair of transportation improvements is expected to reduce heavy truck traffic on residential streets and to improve access to the containerport.

The investment program also includes purchase of a mini-bus for elderly transportation (to be operated by the Kent School) and funds for the improvement of approximately 25 vacant lots in Charlestown.





# G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Housing quality	Preservation of housing stock HIP 312 loans and 115 grants	HIP-\$150,000 312/115-as available	HIP-minimum 200 units per year
	Technical rehab assistance	HIP and BRA staff service	HIP and BRA staff services
	Deep rehabilitation subsidy		Funds for deeper subsidy
Commercial area changes	Rehabilitate & maintain Bunker Hill Housing project		Bring housing up to code; regular maintenance; improved security measures
	Strengthen business organiza- tion to direct revitaliza- tion effort		Commercial revitalization program (see details below)
	Improve attractiveness of Bunker Hill Street commercial area		Street & sidewalk improvements, lights, trees, street furniture Storefront rehab incentive
	Improve attractiveness of Main Street commercial area	Demolition of elevated- previously funded (MBTA)	Street & sidewalk improvements, lights, trees, street furniture Storefront rehab incentive
Capital investment needs	Improve safety of commercial areas	Police foot patrol	Expand street patrol program Robbery suppression unit Improved street lighting (see above)
	Encourage new commercial development	Land assembly-\$33,600 Construction of new shopping center-private funds	
	Improve streets and sidewalks in residential areas	Street and sidewalk improve- ments, trees and lighting \$5,000,000	Street & sidewalk improvements, lights and trees where needed (e.g.-the Neck and Town Hill)



# G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Capital investment needs (cont.)	Construction of new public facilities	Land assembly for elementary school-\$276,500 Construction of new high school complex-\$15,000,000 Stage II Community College-state funded project	New fire station near Navy Yard New elementary school
	Construction of new recreation facilities	Tennis courts	Construction of Little Mystic Playground Additional tennis courts, play areas for children, facilities for elderly and youth recreation Public access to waterfront Paul Revere Landing Park
	Rehabilitation & maintenance of existing recreation facilities	Improvements to: Doherty Playground-\$170,000 Harvard Mall-\$100,000 Ryan Playground-\$100,000 Phipps St. Cemetery-\$75,000	Improvements to Barry Playground Improvements to Harvard Mall Regular maintenance of facilities
	Restoration & reuse of vacant lots	Vacant lot improvements-\$25,000	Sale and restoration of vacant lots
Social Service needs	Meet special service needs of residents	Mini-bus for elderly transportation	
Transportation problems	Provide improved truck access to industrial areas and remove truck traffic from residential streets	Little Mystic Bridge & Water/Chelsea Sts. connector EIS-\$115,000 (BRA/Massport joint funding)	Funding of proposed improvements (Urban Systems)

G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Transportation problems (cont.)	Ease traffic congestion and improve pedestrian safety	Traffic & parking improvements-\$196,860 Pedestrian bridge Rutherford at Austin St.-\$200,000 Demolition of elevated- previously funded	City Square redesign & improvements (Urban Systems) Pedestrian bridge Rutherford Ave. near Essex Street
Major potential redevelopment	Provide good transit service for residents and workers	Redevelopment of Navy Yard	Improved bus service and passenger loading areas Exclusive bus lanes
	Redevelopment of Sullivan Square		Depending on proposal: acquisition of land, building rehab & demolition, infrastructure, development incentives, creation of public access & amenities
			Depending on proposal: acquisition of land, building rehab & demolition, infrastructure, development incentives



G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Major potential redevelopment (cont.)	Redevelopment of land north of Mystic Channel		Related transportation improvements







M3/B16  
RA  
75/7  
pt. 3

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS  
DEPARTMENT  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

WORKING DRAFT  
FOR  
COMMUNITY REVIEW

BMA-015

DORCHESTER

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June, 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- A. SHORT HISTORY AND RECENT TRENDS
- B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS
  - Columbia Point
  - Columbia - Savin Hill
  - Uphams Corner - Jones Hill
  - Mount Bowdoin
  - Meeting House Hill
  - Fields Corner West
  - Fields Corner East
  - Popes Hill - Neponset
  - Codman Square East
  - Codman Square West
  - Codman Hill
  - Ashmont
  - Lower Mills
  - Cedar Grove
- C. PAST PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT
- D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES
  - 1. Residential Disinvestment
  - 2. Commercial Center Decline-Blighted Major Streets
  - 3. Waterfront Improvement
  - 4. Columbia Point
- E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM
- F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS
- G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS AS RELATED TO ISSUES, STRATEGIES AND 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM





## INTRODUCTION

This report, prepared by the Dorchester District Planners, is a draft document which is meant to facilitate discussion among residents and City representatives on planning strategies and investment needs.

The report does a number of things:

First, it establishes a base of population, income and housing data as well as a listing and analysis of recent public and private investment in Dorchester. This information can be used by those who are involved in the planning process, neighborhood residents, Little City Hall staff and other City agencies and departments.

Second, it offers an analysis of the major issues which confront the community along with recommended strategies. These strategies should form the basis of discussion for community residents for the Community Development and Capital Improvement process as well as for involvement in issues which are not addressed by City expenditures such as zoning, private development or State funded programs.

Third, the report makes recommendations for investments, both public and private, which are necessary to help carry through the recommended strategies.





..... HISTORICAL DORCHESTER



DORCHESTER



## A. SHORT HISTORY

The Town of Dorchester was settled and incorporated in 1630, at which time it included both South Boston and Hyde Park. For nearly 200 years it developed primarily as a farming area with the waterfront and the Neponset River providing the basis for small commercial villages at Lower Mills and near Commercial Point. The Dorchester North Burying Ground at Uphams Corner, established in 1634, and the Blake House at Edward Everett Square, constructed around 1650, are reminders of the earliest days of Dorchester. The seeds of its suburban relationship to Boston were sown during the early 1800's when large estates and summer homes were built, particularly near the tops of the numerous hills, to provide wealthy Bostonians an escape from the crowded conditions of the City.

In 1804 South Boston was separated from Dorchester and annexed to the City. Dorchester was further reduced in size when, in 1868, Hyde Park became a separate town. Two years later Dorchester, a rural town of 12,000 residents, was annexed to the City of Boston and a period of very rapid suburban development began. Based on the extension of the street car lines and the municipal water supply, the population rose rapidly to 150,000 persons by 1920, close to the present level.

The development of Dorchester is exemplified by areas such as Jones Hill, where the ten major estate owners of 1870 slowly began selling off pieces of their property in a rather haphazard fashion, and by Ashmont Hill, where George Welles carefully laid out a pattern of streets and house lots over the entire estate and, in 1872, built a number of speculative houses at strategic locations in order to stimulate the sale of house lots. One and two family houses in a variety of Victorian styles were constructed throughout Dorchester during this period. Later, a new building code stimulated the development of the three family housing style which became known as the "triple decker". Built in a wide range of sizes, styles and quality, ranging from spacious and elegantly detailed to the simplest of basic housing, triple deckers were popular in most sections of the City being developed at this time, springing up on vacant land between existing buildings and lining new streets with rows of front porches and bay windows.

The street car lines produced a pattern of commercial strip development along major streets, providing services within walking distance of most dwellings and convenient to the major transportation system. Industrial uses were located close to their critical transportation systems, the waterfront and the railroad lines.

After World War II, enormous nationwide changes in patterns of development resulted from new highway construction, widespread automobile ownership, availability of VA and FHA mortgages; the growth of truck transportation and the "baby boom". The pendulum of taste swung sharply toward a suburban ideal of single family homes, quarter acre lots, drive-in stores and truck oriented businesses. The rapid suburban expansion into Milton, Randolph and similar towns drained many of the upper and middle income residents and more importantly their children from the "old fashioned" residential neighborhoods of Dorchester.



## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

The Dorchester District extends from Edward Everett Square to Mattapan Square and includes a population of approximately 180,000 people, greater than any city in Massachusetts except Boston. This is a large and exceedingly complex area to understand and plan for or to treat adequately in a single document. Consequently a "Planning District" has been established which includes the area to the east of the Midlands Branch Railroad, extending from Edward Everett Square to Lower Mills. This planning district, including primarily the Uphams Corner and Fields Corner Little City Hall areas, has a population of approximately 112,000 people, making it the fourth largest "city" in the Commonwealth. This report will deal with the Dorchester Planning District only, and the remainder of Dorchester will be covered by other reports being prepared in conjunction with this one.

The information on population and housing in this report is derived from the U.S. Census of 1960 and 1970 and from a survey conducted in 1972 by the City of Boston Housing Inspection Department. In order to better understand the tremendous variety of people and neighborhoods within the Dorchester Planning District, the available data has been organized on the basis of 14 geographic areas which in part reflect historic area names and civic group areas, but also indicate areas of differing income levels, differing racial compositions and differing housing stock characteristics.

A general description of the Dorchester Planning District based on Census data would show a slowly declining total population with an increasing minority population, although neither the rate of population loss nor the percentage of minority population is as great as the City average. Dorchester tends to have more children, a more stable population, higher average incomes and fewer poverty level families than the City. There is also a high percentage of homeowners and a predominantly single to three family housing stock.

Any attempt to describe the characteristics of all Dorchester masks a broad range of widely differing communities with measurably different population and housing characteristics. Columbia Point is the most outstandingly different examples, having worse building conditions, lower incomes, more children, fewer elderly and more Black and Spanish speaking residents than any other Dorchester neighborhood. Even excluding Columbia Point, the Census data tells a story of great diversity with neighborhoods ranging from 25% above the City average income level to 25% below average. Some neighborhoods have twice the proportion of elderly residents that others have. The percentage of children in various neighborhoods ranges from 26% to 42%. The percentage of Black and Spanish speaking residents varies from 0% to 57%. In some neighborhoods 70% of the population has lived in the same house for more than five years while in others only 40% has this degree of stability. Lower density single and two family houses provide up to 77% of the housing units in some neighborhoods but only 21% in others. According to the 1972 survey, building conditions varied from only 8% of dwelling units in some neighborhoods needing major fix-up expenditures to as many as 50% requiring substantial work in other areas.

There is no comprehensive data available since the 1970 Census and the 1972 building condition survey, but it is clear that in the neighborhoods where the BBURG program operated until 1972 the blockbusting type of fears of complete racial change and declining property values, concentrated mortgages for low income homeowners and certain problems with the program have resulted in a continued decrease in the White population since 1970 and a deteriorated housing stock with which new, predominantly Black owners must struggle in order to bring it back to acceptable standards. Since 1972, the problems of BBURG, which included excessively low down payments for homes, lack of information about needed repairs and excessively high prices in relation to the condition of the building and the income of the owner, have been aggravated by the national economic recession and the rapid inflation which have affected lower income people most drastically. The shortage of mortgage money and home improvement loan money and the high rates when it was available over the past two years have also made it more difficult for people to improve their homes or to sell them to a new owner. All of these factors have probably contributed to a decline of building conditions, particularly in areas of racial transition, since the 1972 building condition survey.

A survey of recent foreclosures of FHA insured mortgages revealed that 196 mortgages were foreclosed in the seven month period from June 1974 to December 1974 throughout Massachusetts. The Dorchester Planning District had 53 of these foreclosures, of which only 9 were located outside the old BBURG program area. The heaviest concentration of foreclosures was in the Franklin Field area west of the Midlands Branch Railroad line, extending as far south as Walk Hill Street. This was the area of greatest panic selling under BBURG. The foreclosure of FHA insured mortgages appears to have peaked in 1973 when 367 mortgages were foreclosed state wide. It is estimated that approximately 300 insured mortgages have been foreclosed in the Dorchester Planning District over the past four years. Many of these buildings were readily resold once they were offered for sale by HUD, other are still available and some have been demolished.

Since 1970, approximately 250 buildings in the Dorchester Planning District have been demolished, including some of the approximately 300 buildings on which the FHA insured mortgages have been foreclosed by the banks. Although this represents a small portion of the housing supply in Dorchester, it is a waste of a tremendous resource and in addition has had a severe impact in those neighborhoods where there has been a concentration of problem buildings.

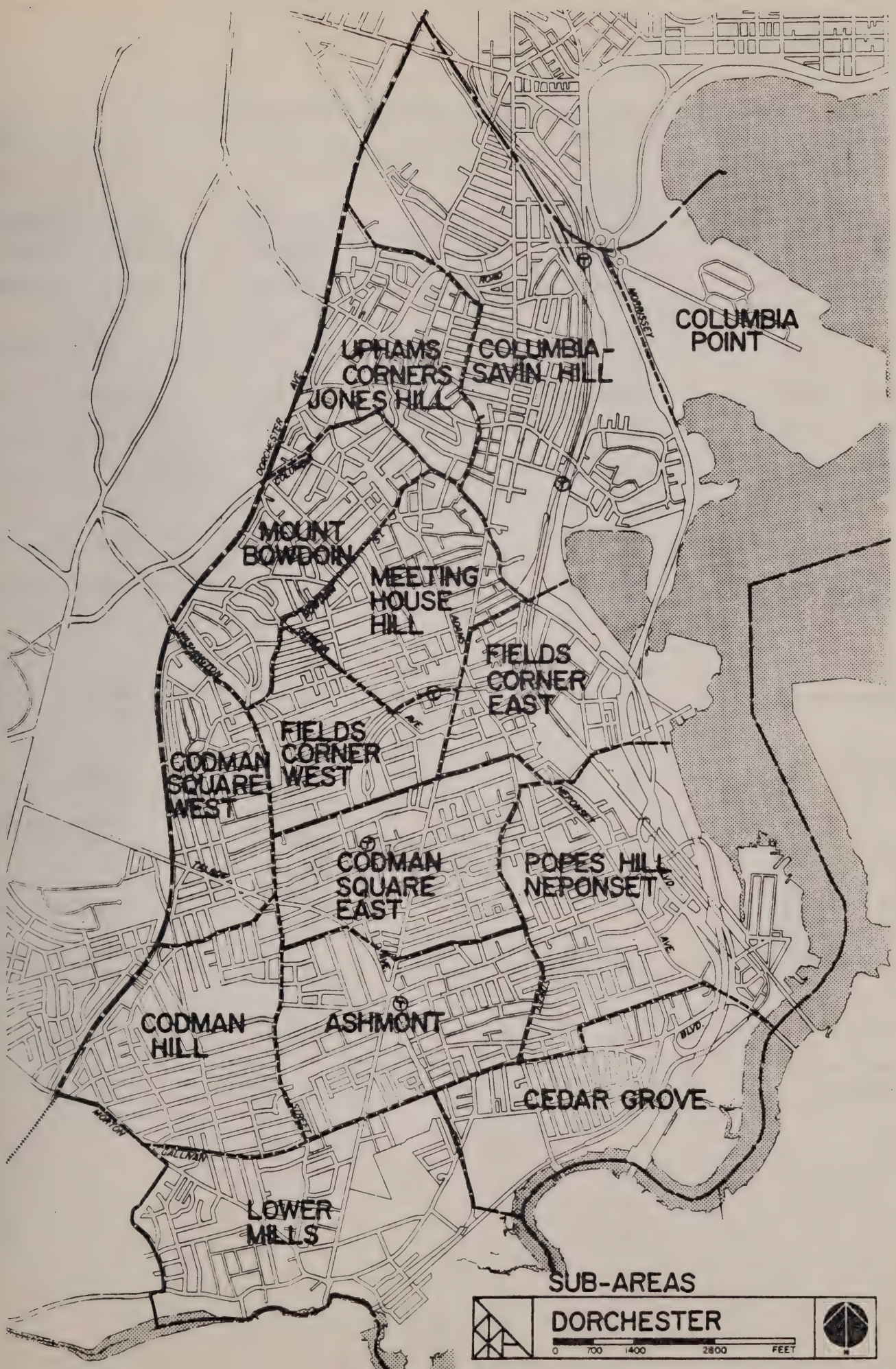
In order to live in a community in which people can have pride, it is necessary to counteract the self-fulfilling prophecy of neighborhood decline which can be generated by these problems and which can eliminate the desire of individuals to improve their homes and neighborhoods. A lack of confidence can also result in removal of the tools which are needed to build on the strengths of the neighborhoods such as mortgage money, home improvement loans and adequate insurance.



There is evidence in Dorchester which runs counter to many of the myths behind the fears of neighborhood decline. The belief that the presence of a Black population inevitably leads to the transition of a neighborhood and adjacent neighborhoods from predominantly White to predominantly Black is not supported by the experience of the Uphams Corner-Jones Hill area which had the earliest major Black population but has not experienced a rapid transition. The belief that a process of racial change in a neighborhood is always associated with deterioration is being proved incorrect in the area west of Fields Corner where, despite the recent economic hardships, properties are being well maintained as the number of Black families living in the area has increased. The belief that the presence of a number of buildings which have been abandoned, burned or demolished must result in a continuing downward spiral resulting in sweeping decay, has been countered in the Ripley Road area where people have decided not to be trapped by fear and have conspicuously invested in their properties.

### The Neighborhoods

The following table and map present population and housing data for a number of sub-areas and a brief discussion of the particularly unique conditions in each area follows. The areas discussed in some cases reflect civic association areas but were also chosen to reflect differing housing and population characteristics.



SUB-AREAS

DORCHESTER

0 700 1400 2800 FEET



# Comparative Statistics - Dorchester Planning District

## 1970 U.S. Census Data

<u>Population</u>	<u>Columbia Point</u>	<u>Columbia Savin Hill</u>	<u>Uphams Cor. Jones Hill</u>	<u>Mount Bowdoin</u>	<u>Meeting House Hill</u>
Total 1970	4,700	15,300	9,700	9,600	10,000
Total Black 1960	790 16%	5 0%	150 2%	30 1%	0 0%
Total Black 1970	2,830 60%	50 0%	800 8%	2,200 23%	100 1%
Total Spanish 1970	10%	1%	6%	3%	1%
Aged 60 yrs & over '70	9%	16%	21%	13%	14%
Aged 18 yrs & under '70	58%	33%	36%	40%	36%
Same Residence over 5 years	55%	58%	49%	46%	55%
<u>Income</u>					
Median Family 1970	\$4,100	\$8,900- 10,100	\$6,600- 9,100	\$7,500- 8,700	\$9,000- 9,200
Families under \$5,000	62%	17%	20%	27%	18%
<u>Housing</u>					
Total Dwelling Units	1,420	4,900	3,430	2,760	3,080
Units Needing Fix-up in excess of \$1,000	1,420 100%	840 17%	960 28%	1,370 50%	1,100 36%
Owner Occupied Structures	0%	81%	74%	76%	79%
Single and Two Family Structures	0%	26%	24%	25%	21%

<u>Population</u>	<u>Fields Cor. West</u>	<u>Fields Cor. East</u>	<u>Popes Hill Neponset</u>	<u>Codman Sq. East</u>	<u>Codman Sq. West</u>
total 1970	7,000	3,100	9,500	11,000	8,100
total Black 1960	5 0%	5 0%	5 0%	5 0%	110 1%
total Black 1970	230 3%	20 1%	50 0%	40 0%	4,300 53%
total Spanish 1970	1%	2%	0%	1%	4%
aged 60 yrs & over '70	17%	18%	20%	22%	11%
aged 18 yrs & under '70	32%	31%	32%	31%	42%
Home Residence over 5 years	59%	56%	63%	57%	40%
<u>Income</u>					
Median Family 1970	\$9,100- 10,500	\$9,600	\$10,000- 11,600	\$10,000- 10,500	\$7,500- 9,000
families under \$5,000	17%	18%	12%	16%	25%
<u>Housing</u>					
total Dwelling Units	2,030	1,170	2,930	3,570	2,480
Units Needing Fix-up in excess of \$1,000	840 41%	290 25%	470 16%	830 23%	1,130 46%
Owner Occupied Structures	84%	84%	86%	85%	80%
Single and Two Family Structures	45%	37%	56%	38%	32%



<u>Population</u>	<u>Codman Hill</u>	<u>Ashmont</u>	<u>Lower Mills</u>	<u>Cedar Grove</u>	<u>Dorchester Planning District</u>	<u>City</u>
Total 1970	9,500	7,800	6,400	3,300	112,000	641,000
Total Black 1960	80 1%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1,200 1%	10%
Total Black 1970	1,000 11%	60 1%	5 0%	5 0%	11,700 10%	16%
Total Spanish 1970	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	3%
Aged 60 yrs & over '70	16%	25%	23%	24%	18%	18%
Aged 18 yrs & under '70	34%	26%	26%	26%	32%	28%
Same Residence over 5 years	54%	57%	62%	70%	55%	50%
<u>Income</u>						
Median Family 1970	\$8,700- 11,100	\$9,500- 11,700	\$11,400	\$11,600	\$9,300	\$9,100
Families under \$5,000	18%	14%	12%	6%	20%	22%
<u>Housing</u>						
Total Dwelling Units	3,050	2,620	1,890	1,210	36,540	
Units Needing Fix-up in excess of \$1,000	450 15%	300 11%	70 3%	100 8%	10,170 28%	
Owner Occupied Structures	86%	90%	90%	92%	80%	80%
Single and two family Structures	43%	53%	75%	77%	38%	15%

## COLUMBIA POINT

Columbia Point contains a 1,500 apartment public housing complex and is distinctly different from other Dorchester neighborhoods. It has the highest percentage of minority residents and of children, the fewest elderly, the lowest median family income and the worst building conditions of any neighborhood. Located on a peninsula physically separated from the rest of Dorchester by a major transportation corridor and commercial area, Columbia Point has relatively little interaction with the rest of Dorchester except through the schools and the University of Massachusetts. The issues confronting this community are also unique, principally the need for the tenants to work with the Boston Housing Authority to provide improved physical conditions, higher maintenance standards and security. There is also a need for a nearby shopping area where food and other necessities are available at reasonable prices. Strengths on which the community can build include the new University of Massachusetts as well as the City school facilities, the large amounts of recreational open space, the attractive waterfront location and proximity to the Columbia MBTA Station.

## COLUMBIA - SAVIN HILL

Columbia - Savin Hill, along with the other neighborhoods to the north of Fields Corner, has a relatively low proportion of single and two family homes. However, it has a higher proportion of buildings with an owner occupant and better building conditions. Those buildings which have deteriorated are frequently owned by large landlords who can create a significant negative impact on a street when they allow a group of adjacent buildings to decline and become a major problem. The areas population is predominantly White and very stable, particularly for an area with a large proportion of tenants. Two stops on the MBTA Red Line and the well used parks and beaches are strong positive factors as are the strong community organizations which have recently participated in developing a Neighborhood Housing Services Corporation, the Marr Boy's Club, the new Dorchester House and a strong relationship with the University of Massachusetts.

## UPHAMS CORNER - JONES HILL

Uphams Corner - Jones Hill has had the most experience of any Dorchester neighborhood in dealing with a mixture of racial and ethnic groups, having had the earliest Black population and the largest Spanish speaking population. Although median family income is low, there are not as many poverty level families as in some other neighborhoods and building conditions have remained fairly good despite a high percentage of absentee owned buildings. The area has some housing abandonment, but also has some of the most attractive residential streets in Dorchester.



### MOUNT BOWDOIN

Mount Bowdoin has had a very rapid racial transition since 1960 with large numbers of young Black families moving in, resulting in a very low proportion of elderly residents and a high percentage of children. In 1970 the area had the highest proportion of families with incomes below the poverty level, and in 1972 the worst building conditions except for the public housing at Columbia Point. Although many buildings have been abandoned or demolished, much fine housing and many attractive streets remain. The lack of rapid transit may be one of the factors which has facilitated decline in the area along with the high percentage of absentee owned buildings and the operation of the BBURG program.

### MEETING HOUSE HILL

Meeting House Hill is the most densely developed section of Dorchester with only 21% of its dwelling units in single and two family houses. There are few large apartment buildings in the area, the majority of the buildings being three family structures. Although in 1970 income levels, owner occupancy, residential stability and minority population were generally similar to Jones Hill and Columbia - Savin Hill, building conditions were substantially worse than these adjacent areas. This may be the result of a fear on the part of some property owners that racial change will occur and might cause property values to decline. The high proportion of children in the neighborhood may also be causing deterioration of the relatively high density three family housing stock.

### FIELDS CORNER WEST

Fields Corner West has a much higher proportion of single and two family homes than the adjacent areas of Meeting House Hill, Mount Bowdoin, Codman Square West and Fields Corner East as well as generally higher income levels, greater population stability, higher owner occupancy and fewer children. Building conditions in the 1972 survey were not as good as might be expected given the other positive factors. However, there have not been large numbers of buildings abandoned or foreclosed and the area has remained attractive, particularly the southern portion as a sizeable Black population has moved in.

### POPES HILL - NEPONSET

Popes Hill - Neponset is a relatively upper income, highly stable area with almost no minority population. There is a high percentage of single and two family houses and the housing stock is generally newer than in most parts of Dorchester. Building conditions are good and owner occupancy is high. The accessibility of the waterfront for recreational use is both a strength and a continuing issue to this community.

### CODMAN SQUARE EAST

Codman Square East is an area of above average income with little minority population. It is somewhat more densely developed than the immediately adjacent areas, having a number of attractive but very heavily populated streets of triple deckers. Shawmut Station provides excellent transit service to this area.

### CODMAN SQUARE WEST

Codman Square West has experienced the sharpest changes of any section since 1960. The Black population increased rapidly from 1% to 53% in 1970, a trend which has continued. There is also a substantial Spanish speaking population. The influx of young families has resulted in the highest percentage of children of any area, the lowest percentage of elderly and the lowest percentage of people living in the same house for more than five years. Although incomes are low, home ownership has remained high, perhaps due to the BBURG program. Building conditions are poor, however, and low income homeowners are having difficulty maintaining their property. There has been a large number of mortgage foreclosures and buildings abandoned or demolished. There have also been successful community efforts to encourage residents to improve their property despite other problem buildings in the area. Marginal use of industrially zoned land along the Midlands Branch Railroad has been a negative influence on the community and there is no rapid transit service.

### CODMAN HILL

Codman Hill is an area of predominantly single and two family homes in good condition and people of average to moderately high income. Although population and housing characteristics would suggest otherwise, parts of the area have recently experienced housing abandonment and mortgage foreclosure, particularly in the northern section near Norfolk Street and Dorchester High School. This may in part be due to fear of racial transition and a spillover of problems in the BBURG area directly to the north.

### ASHMONT

Ashmont is one of the lower density residential areas in Dorchester with a predominance of single and two family houses, very high owner occupancy, good building conditions and generally high income. The very high percentage of residents over age 60 is a potential weakness if elderly homeowners are caught with fixed incomes in a period of inflation, or find themselves unable to continue to perform routine maintenance and need to rely on high cost labor for needed repairs and maintenance.



### LOWER MILLS

Lower Mills is a very low density residential area with 75% of its housing units in single and two family structures. The presence of large amounts of public open space including Dorchester Park, Walsh Playground and the Neponset River Reservation contribute to the low density character. Income levels are high and building conditions are excellent, although there is a high level of elderly population which could contribute to a future weakness in the housing market. A new shopping area has been successfully opened on River Street, but there are vacant commercial buildings in the older center and vacant land along River Street, the future use of which should be carefully controlled. The Lower Mills area contains many of the older and more interesting buildings in Dorchester which contribute to the attractiveness of the area and which should be preserved.

### CEDAR GROVE

Cedar Grove is the most suburban section of Dorchester with the newest houses, 91% of which are owner occupied, and the highest percentage of dwelling units in single and two family houses. Building conditions are excellent, incomes are high and the population is the most stable of any neighborhood with 70% of the residents living in the same house for over 5 years. There is some conflict between residential and commercial uses along Gallivan Boulevard and Hilltop Street and the quality and accessibility of the Neponset River shoreline should be improved as an asset to the community.

### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

A major public construction program has been underway in Dorchester with \$48,000,000 expended over the past seven years. A primary thrust of the program has been the improvement of school facilities, making them suitable for contemporary education, useful more hours of the day, and equipt to provide a broader range of activities which serve all ages. Five schools have been constructed or completely renovated at a cost of \$35,000,000. Over \$1,000,000 has been spent to provide major improvements at most parks and playgrounds. Police District 11 has a new station and a new library was constructed at Fields Corner. The investment of City money helped Dorchester House secure Federal funding for a new full service community center. In addition, 11 miles of streets, 9 miles of sidewalks and 8 miles of sewer and water lines were re-constructed. High intensity lighting has been provided at three major commercial centers as a part of an overall effort to improve the business climate.

Recent public investment in housing has included three new elderly housing developments built by the Boston Housing Authority on Meeting House Hill, south of Codman Square and at Lower Mills. The Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency has provided low and moderate income housing through the renovation of older buildings on Dudley Street, Norwell Street, Algonquin and Bradlee Streets and at Norfolk Street and Talbot Avenue.

Recently the City's Housing Improvement Program has provided tax rebates for rehabilitation of owner occupied buildings. Of the first 800 buildings to be improved under this program approximately 200 were in the Dorchester Planning District. This represents an estimated private investment of about \$1,000,000 generated by \$100,000 in public investment.

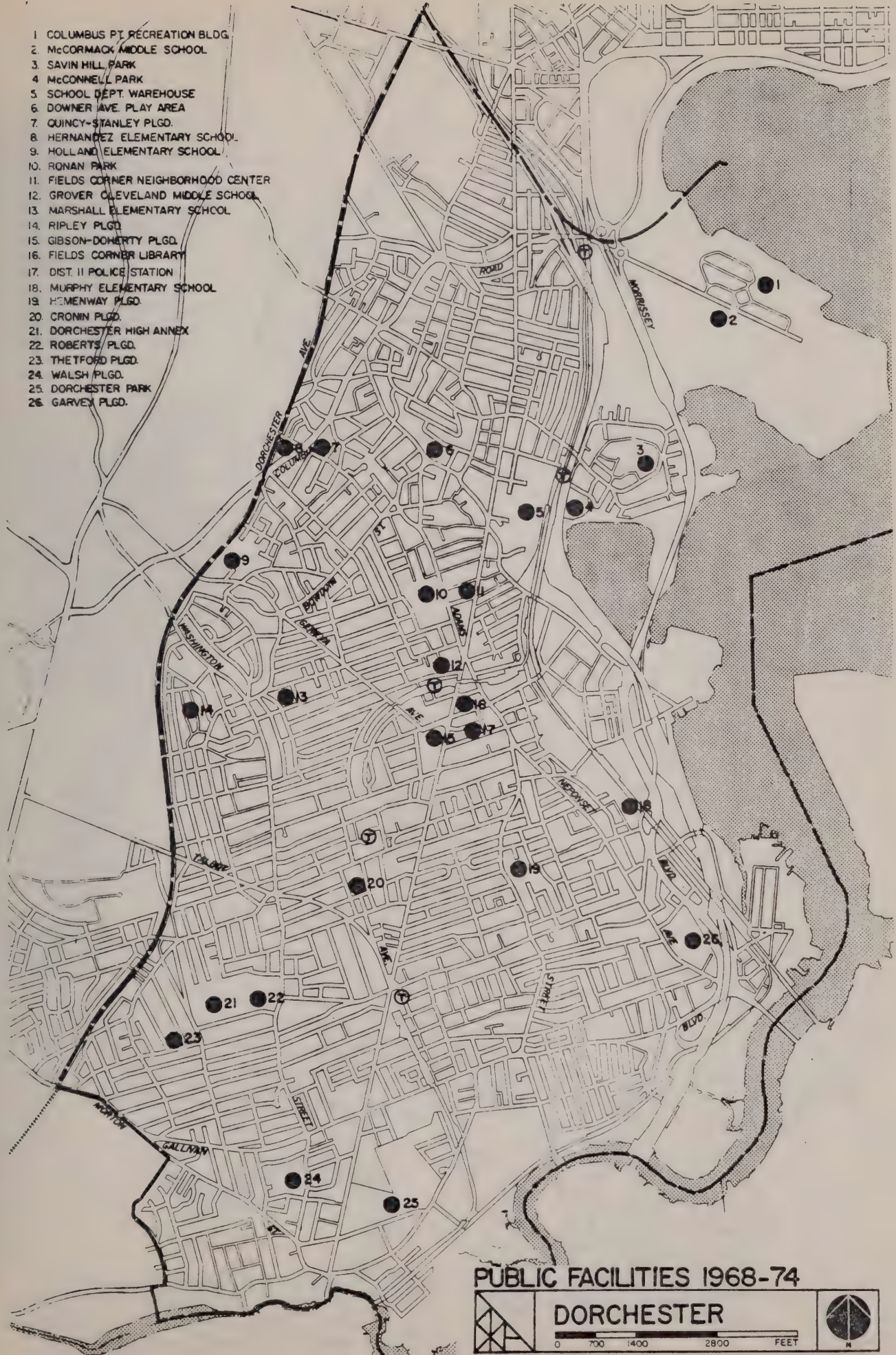
### PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

A review of building permits for major construction or renovation since 1970 showed substantial private investment in all sectors except housing. No new apartment buildings and little major renovation were undertaken without the subsidy of the Boston Housing Authority or Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency. This reflects the fact that Dorchester is built up primarily with single to three family houses which require a low level of continuous maintenance rather than major rehabilitation and that little land is available and suitable for apartment construction. The lack of major construction activity also reflects the housing market, which generally does not have a high demand for apartment type housing at the rents required to support new construction. The older housing available frequently provides superior housing at about half the cost of new housing. Although the survey of building permits does not show it, private investment in housing is substantial, consisting of large numbers of owners making small investments of from \$500 to \$5,000 to continuously maintain and improve their property, a process which is not susceptible to monitoring or quantification. The substantial expenditures under the Housing Improvement Program identify only a part of this investment over a short period of time.



Investment for commercial, industrial and institutional uses shows a pattern of renovation and expansion of existing facilities rather than construction of new facilities for new businesses. Substantial capital investments were made by the First National Bank, St. Margaret's Hospital, New England Telephone Company, Boston Globe, Marr Boy's Club, Dorchester House, Blinstrubs, First National Stores, Meeting House Hill Cooperative Bank, Sperry Rand Corporation, Carney Hospital, Gino's Restaurant, Puritan Mall and Kentucky Fried Chicken. It is clear that Morrissey Boulevard has continued to develop strongly as a modern automobile oriented commercial strip over recent years and has been the location of the largest portion of the private investment.

- 1 COLUMBUS PT. RECREATION BLDG.
- 2 MCCORMACK MIDDLE SCHOOL
- 3 SAVIN HILL PARK
- 4 MCCONNELL PARK
- 5 SCHOOL DEPT. WAREHOUSE
- 6 DOWNER AVE. PLAY AREA
- 7 QUINCY-STANLEY PLGD.
- 8 HERNANDEZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- 9 HOLLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- 10 RONAN PARK
- 11 FIELDS CORNER NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER
- 12 GROVER CLEVELAND MIDDLE SCHOOL
- 13 MARSHALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- 14 RIPLEY PLGD.
- 15 GIBSON-DOHERTY PLGD.
- 16 FIELDS CORNER LIBRARY
- 17 DIST. II POLICE STATION
- 18 MURPHY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- 19 HEMENWAY PLGD.
- 20 CRONIN PLGD.
- 21 DORCHESTER HIGH ANNEX
- 22 ROBERTS PLGD.
- 23 THETFORD PLGD.
- 24 WALSH PLGD.
- 25 DORCHESTER PARK
- 26 GARVEY PLGD.



PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74



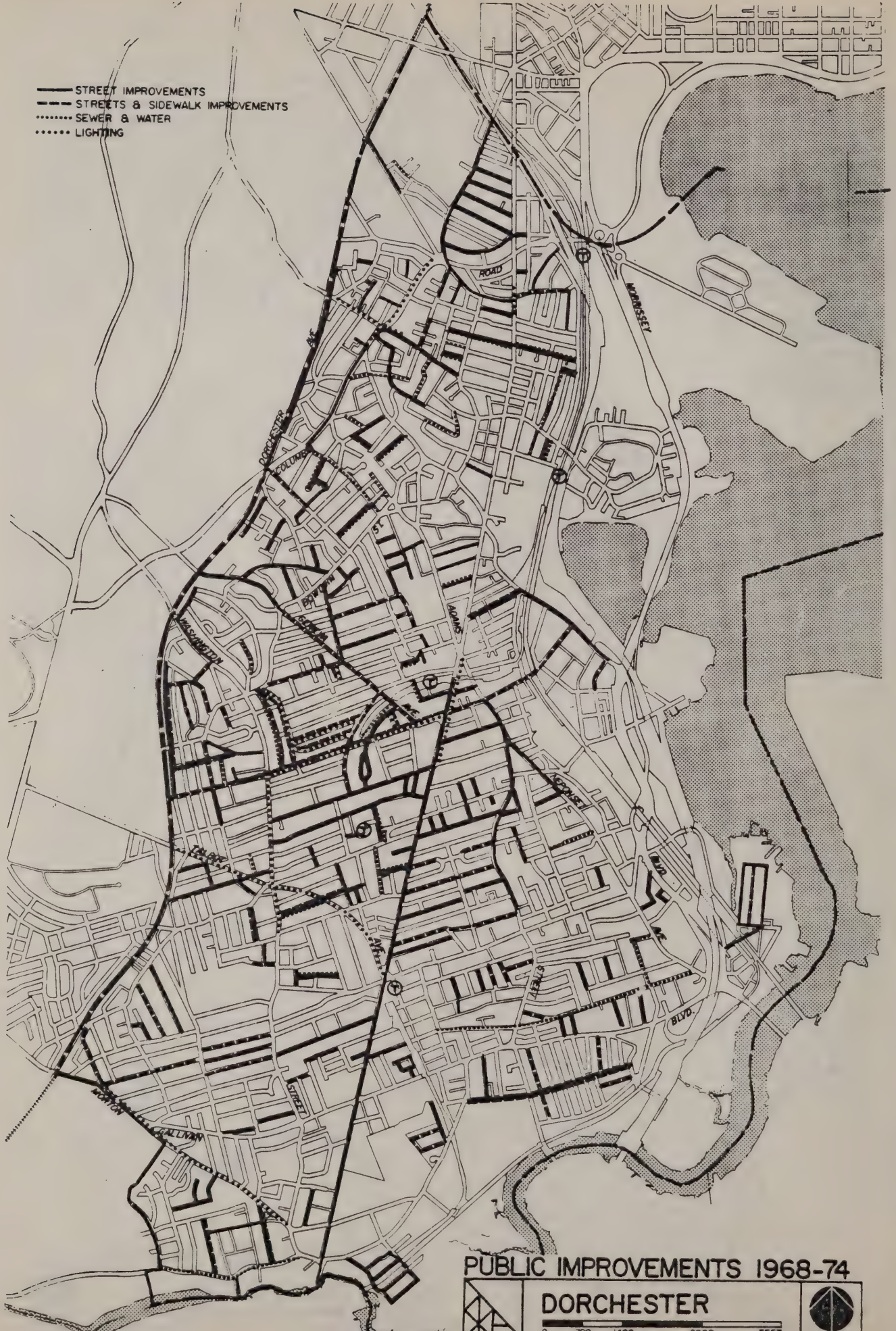
DORCHESTER

0 700 1400 2800 FEET





- STREET IMPROVEMENTS
- - - STREETS & SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS
- ..... SEWER & WATER
- ..... LIGHTING



PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1968-74

DORCHESTER

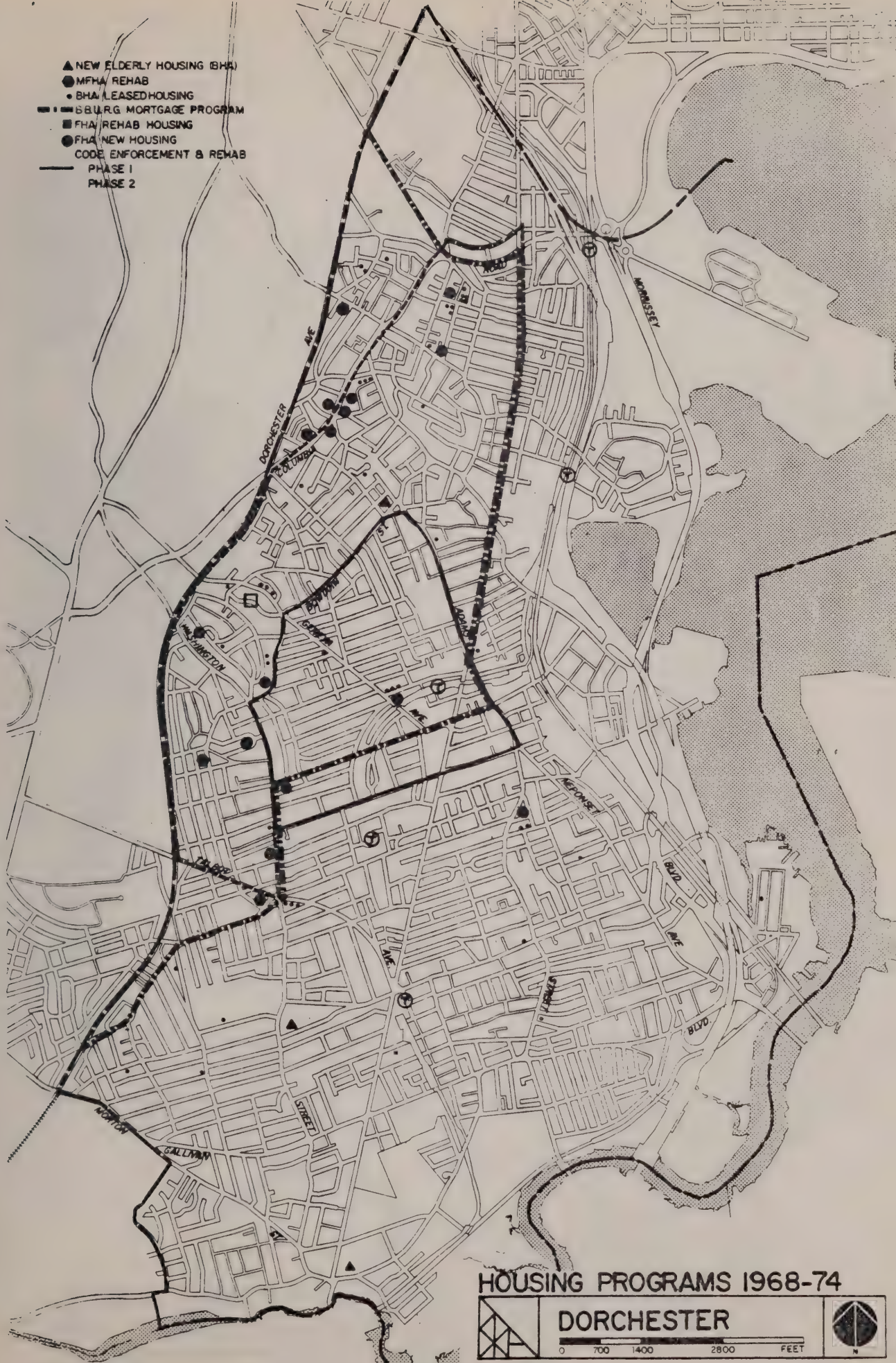


0 700 1400 2800 FEET

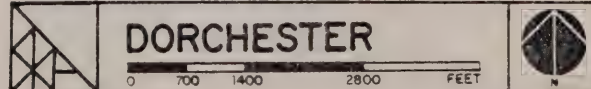




- ▲ NEW ELDERLY HOUSING (BHA)
- MFHA REHAB
- BHA LEASED HOUSING
- B.B. & B. MORTGAGE PROGRAM
- FHA REHAB HOUSING
- FHA NEW HOUSING
- CODE ENFORCEMENT & REHAB
- PHASE 1
- PHASE 2



HOUSING PROGRAMS 1968-74





RENOVATED



NEW  
RESIDENTIAL  
COMMERCIAL  
INDUSTRIAL  
INSTITUTIONAL



PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1968-74

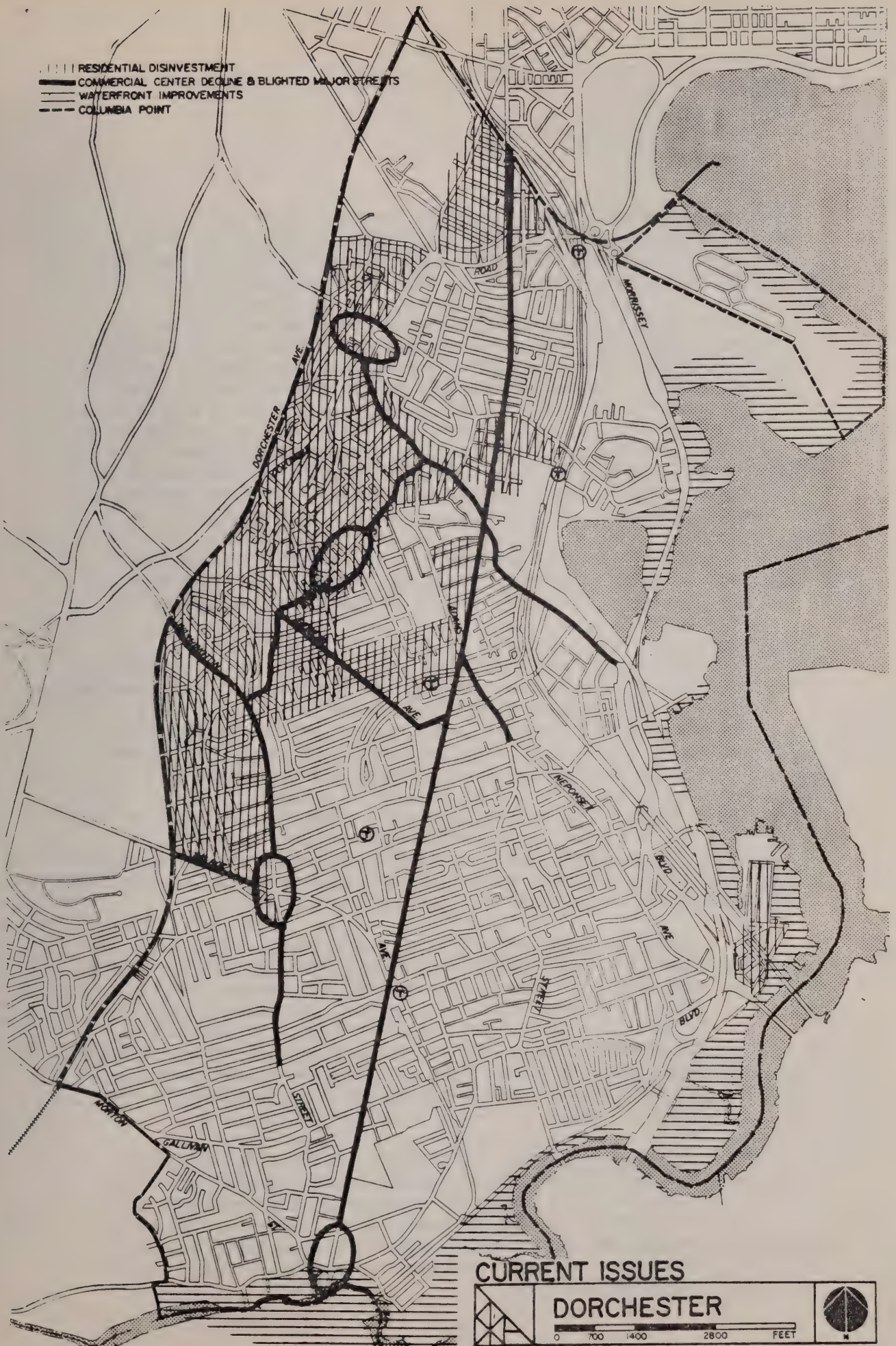
DORCHESTER

0 700 1400 2800 FEET





- ||||| RESIDENTIAL DISINVESTMENT
- COMMERCIAL CENTER DECLINE & BLIGHTED MAJOR STREETS
- WATERFRONT IMPROVEMENTS
- COLUMBIA POINT



# CURRENT ISSUES

**DORCHESTER**

0 700 1400 2800 FEET



## D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

### 1. RESIDENTIAL DISINVESTMENT

#### Issue

Several neighborhoods in Dorchester have in recent years experienced residential disinvestment, a process in which owners reduce ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation expenditures such that the housing stock deteriorates in quality.

This process can be particularly destructive in an area like Dorchester where the stock is made up of older, predominantly wood frame structures, which require a high degree of on-going maintenance. When maintenance is put off too long in frame structures, deterioration accelerates, and delayed maintenance is often prohibitively expensive. Therefore, unlike the South End or Charlestown (which contain predominantly masonry structures), there may not be the option in parts of Dorchester of reinvesting in housing that has undergone prolonged periods of disinvestment.

It is, therefore, in Dorchester's and the City's long-term best interest to reverse the process of disinvestment where it has occurred, and to prevent it from spreading elsewhere in the district.

The process of disinvestment and housing decline is caused by a number of complex and interrelated factors, the exact combination of which varies from neighborhood to neighborhood. These include ownership patterns, structure type, the proportion of owners vs. renters, race and ethnicity, lending patterns and the proportion of very young and very old residents.

These factors can combine to cause a loss of confidence on the part of some owners and tenants in the future stability of their investments and neighborhoods, causing them to disinvest. Contributing factors to both loss of confidence and disinvestment include the following:

- Changing fashion and housing preferences. In the past 30 years, many City residents have sought suburban lifestyles and housing. This has been reinforced by the redistribution of part of the regional employment base - particularly blue collar jobs- from the central city to the suburbs. In recent years, these trends have begun to reverse, with some sections of the City experiencing an influx of younger middle-class residents to replace those who have left.
- Absentee landlords. Some areas of the district contain substantial numbers of absentee-owned structures. These structures are particularly prone to disinvestment and deterioration, because owners do not have to live in the deteriorating housing, and because management and owner-tenant relations tend to be more difficult than in owner-occupied buildings.

- Changing transportation networks and technology. Although the central section of the district is well served by the MBTA Red Line, areas to the west and southeast which once had trolley service are now poorly served by public transportation, thereby reducing demand for housing in these areas.
- Racial transition. In some areas, many property owners reduce maintenance and rehabilitation expenditures or simply move out in anticipation of racial change. The result is that before minorities actually move in, disinvestment may already be in an advanced stage. Where whites move out of an area in a panic (sometimes due to blockbusting), the number of houses on the market may exceed the number of buyers seeking housing in the area. This can result in a serious reduction in market values or in outright abandonment.
- Lack of mortgage or rehabilitation loans (Redlining). Many banks and insurance companies may perceive broad areas as being unsound places for their investments, often when there is substantial resident and investor confidence in the same area or in specific neighborhoods within the area. Redlining occurs when willing investors cannot obtain adequate mortgage or rehabilitation financing, with the result that new investors are discouraged from entering the market, and needed housing repairs and rehabilitation cannot be financed. Redlining results in a self-fulfilling prophecy of declining market values and disinvestment by not allowing communities the opportunity to build on and expand areas of strength.

In order to better describe how these factors combine to cause disinvestment and housing abandonment, it is useful to construct a brief scenario outlining the process (bearing in mind that the exact process will vary depending on local market conditions):

- Disinvestment occurs when owners and tenants lose confidence (due to any or all of the reasons outlined above: i.e. absentee ownership, racial transition, redlining, etc.).
- As housing conditions deteriorate, redlining intensifies, discouraging replacement buyers and reducing market values.
- Some owners move out and attempt to operate structures as absentee-owners; inexperience with management and tenant relations problems can lead to friction with new tenants; rent withholding may lead to untenable cash flows causing owners to walk away from properties.
- Typically, new tenants or owners have lower incomes than those preceding them.
- Cash flows are insufficient to pay for required maintenance and repairs.
- Abandonment may eventually occur.



## Strategies

### A. Provide Rehabilitation and Investment Incentives

The City must expand and develop programs designed to encourage housing rehabilitation in neighborhoods where disinvestment has occurred, and also help maintain investor confidence in all parts of the District. Specific techniques and combinations of programs will vary from neighborhood to neighborhood, depending on the real estate market and on income and repair needs in each area.

There are currently two rehabilitation incentive programs available in Dorchester: the City's Housing Improvement Program (HIP), and the Federal Section 8 Leased Housing Program. HIP provides rebates to owner occupants of 1-6 family structures of 20% of the cost of required housing improvements; Section 8 provides subsidies to owners renting apartments (that conform to housing code standards) to low and moderate income tenants. Both programs offer substantial financial incentives for owners to rehabilitate housing, and Section 8 also provides sufficient rent levels to permit adequate maintenance of rental units once they have been rehabilitated.

If effectively combined, these programs could provide the higher level of subsidy required to encourage rehabilitation even of structures that are seriously deteriorated due to lack of maintenance. To be most effective, these incentive programs should be targeted in the following manner:

- In stable areas, the housing stock needs only moderate rehabilitation and property values are stable. These are areas where confidence may become a factor due to a lack of recent investment activity, the age of the stock, (which requires investment to keep it in good condition) and an awareness of deteriorated buildings in nearby areas. HIP's 20% rebate feature can be used to provide the modest incentive needed to encourage private investment.
- In areas that have experienced disinvestment the housing stock needs moderate rehabilitation. The disinvestment process is evidenced by some seriously deteriorated housing, some abandonment, and a lack of confidence in the area's future. In these areas a deeper incentive is necessary, perhaps one that combines HIP with a Rent Supplement through Section 8 of the State's 707 Leased Housing Program. Another approach would be to establish a revolving loan fund to insure bankable loans. The City should continue with its boarding and demolition programs so that abandoned buildings do not become blighting influences in these neighborhoods. These programs will soon be supplemented by the City's vacant lots program, which will fence and clean up vacant lots and transfer ownership to abutters.

- In areas where abandonment and substantial disinvestment have occurred, much of the remaining housing stock needs major rehabilitation, and property values are questionable. These areas are characterized by abandonment, large tracts of vacant land from previous demolitions, and tax-foreclosed, City-owned properties. Here the priority should be placed on boarding and demolishing abandoned structures and holding larger tracts of vacant land for future development. Rehabilitation of some of the remaining stock may require more substantial incentives than the Housing Improvement Program or guaranteed rents from the Leased Housing programs can provide.

b. Maximize Positive Impact of Capital Improvements and Community Development Programs

The City's Capital Improvements and Community Development programs now represent the bulk of the City's expenditures in Dorchester. These improvements should be programmed so as to have the maximum positive impact on neighborhood stabilization efforts. Capital improvements should also be coordinated with other public and private investment activities (e.g. HIP, MHFA developments, etc.) so as to have a visible impact in neighborhoods where confidence is or may soon be an issue. Suitable areas for such a concentration are Jones Hill, Field's Corner-west, Codman Square-East, Codman Hill, Meeting House Hill, Mt. Bowdoin, and the western and northern portions of the Lower Mills area.

c. Improve Public Relations Efforts

The City should proceed with a major public relations effort to promote confidence on the part of current residents, and also to encourage replacement buyers to seek housing in Dorchester. Promotional brochures should be published highlighting neighborhood preservation and rehabilitation efforts, areas of architectural and historic interest, new or innovative public and private improvements, and the general quality of life available in various parts of the District.

The Dorchester Board of Trade should be encouraged to undertake a similar promotional effort.

d. Emphasize Historic Preservation

Dorchester's historic architecture should be recognized as one of the District's major attributes. Therefore, the City (through the BRA's Preservation Planning Staff or a Landmarks Commission) should work closely with the Dorchester Historical Society and other community groups to identify and protect significant structures and districts. Preservation planning can also be an effective marketing tool in attracting replacement buyers and maintaining resident confidence when architectural qualities are well publicized both within and outside the District.



The first area in Dorchester to be surveyed for historic architecture was Ashmont Hill in 1972. There, a walking tour subsequent to the survey began a modest publicity campaign by neighborhood residents; this in turn has led replacement buyers from throughout the Metropolitan area to seek housing on Ashmont Hill. As a result, this neighborhood has experienced a moderate rise in property values in the past 3 years. This model could be duplicated elsewhere in Dorchester.

Architectural surveys should be completed in the Jones Hill, Meeting House Hill, Mill St., Melville Avenue-Wellesley Park, Neponset-Port Norfolk, Lower Mills neighborhoods, and other areas that request surveys. Data derived from these surveys should be utilized in the public relations effort outlined above, and should form one of the bases for encouraging reinvestment in areas with historic architecture.

e. Encourage New Private Investment

Major new private investment (in the form of residential or commercial development) could act as a catalyst for other smaller scale investments and rehabilitation activities. MHFA developments and other publicly assisted private investment should also be encouraged. Such developments can have a stabilizing effect on property values throughout the District, and can help improve the image of Dorchester as a good investment area and as a good place to live. The City should work closely with community groups to identify suitable locations for major rehabilitation or new development. Such opportunities appear to exist at Peabody Square-Northam Park, the Baker Mills in Lower Mills, Uphams Corner, and along sections of the Cedar Grove riverfront.

If transit service can be created at Neponset Circle and along the Midlands Branch, similar development opportunities could exist in these areas.

f. Transportation Facilities

Options for new transportation facilities should be studied, and if practical, these should be promoted. The proposal by the Governor's Southwest Corridor Task Force for new rapid transit service using the Midlands Branch right-of-way would have a significant beneficial impact on residential and retail market conditions in the Upham's Corner, Mt. Bowdoin, Norwell Street, and Spencer and Norfolk Street areas.

g. Encourage Bank Lending

The recent requirement by the State Banking Commission for disclosure by banks of sources of deposits and mortgage lending patterns creates a number of opportunities to increase the availability of mortgage and rehabilitation financing in Dorchester. Some of these options are as follows:

- Banks could be encouraged to create a mortgage lending pool in which they would share the risk of lending in areas where redlining has occurred in the past.
- Individual banks could begin "greenlining," in which they would commit significant levels of mortgage financing in those areas where their depositors live. This program was recently initiated in Chicago after disclosure was required there.
- Boston banks could form one or more Community Development Corporations that would finance housing rehabilitation and new development in the neighborhoods.

The City should work closely with the Banking community and neighborhood groups to facilitate one or more of these options.

## 2. COMMERCIAL CENTER DECLINE - Blighted Major Arterials

### Issue

Many of Dorchester's older neighborhood commercial centers - like others around the city - are faced with declining retail volumes and security problems that have resulted in boarded up stores and business failures in these centers. Built at the height of Dorchester's population, these centers have been hard hit by competition from suburban-style shopping centers, insufficient parking, shifting product demands, high incidence of theft, robbery and vandalism, in some areas a decrease in purchasing power in the surrounding neighborhoods, and relatively high rents and taxes.

Decline is most evident in the Codman Square, Upham's Corner, and Bowdoin Street shopping districts. Field's Corner - in part because of its Red Line subway service and new shopping center - remains the healthiest of the neighborhood retail districts.

Sections of Major Arterials in the District (particularly Dorchester Avenue, and Washington and Bowdoin Streets) have developed a similar problem, with boarded up stores and apartment blocks, and land use conflicts that have in many cases become blighting influences for the otherwise healthy neighborhoods in which they are located.

The relative decline of the neighborhood centers and commercial arterials is sharply contrasted with the booming business of the Morrissey Boulevard shopping centers, to which much of Dorchester's retail demand has shifted in recent years.



## Strategy

It is apparent that in many neighborhood shopping centers and arterial streets in Dorchester there is not sufficient demand for the large inventory of retail floor area that now exists. It should be recognized, however, that improved security, parking, marketing and pedestrian and storefront improvements could increase the vitality of these areas. These should be supplemented by a program of sidewalk and pedestrian improvements designed to make retail areas more attractive to shoppers. This last program should be coordinated with the City's new storefront improvement program, which will provide 20% rebates to owners or leasees for the cost of needed storefront rehabilitation (where 25% or more of the retailers in an area agree to participate.)

Police and security services must be upgraded if the neighborhood shopping areas are to prosper. Foot patrols now exist in Codman Square and Upham's Corner. These have been quite successful and should continue and be expanded.

In neighborhood centers where it is apparent that there is a surplus of archaic and/or abandoned retail space - as evidenced by large numbers of abandoned and marginal stores - plans should be developed to contract the size of these centers. This can be accomplished through zoning for other uses, disposal of tax-title property for other than retail uses, and the provision of public facilities (e.g. schools, libraries, recreation buildings, parks, etc.) and institutional uses (churches, health centers, boy's clubs, etc.) on land previously occupied by marginal or abandoned retail uses. Elderly housing has been successfully developed in Lower Mills and Bowdoin Street where it appears to be compatible with and supportive of nearby commercial areas.

Land along major streets might in a similar fashion be converted to institutional-public-park uses, with provision for well planned retail or commercial nodes where warranted by neighborhood market demand. This would undoubtedly be an expensive process; however, given the adverse impact of blighted commercial centers and arterial streets on surrounding residential areas, the beneficial impact on these surrounding areas would merit the expense. This program, could, therefore, be an appropriate use of capital improvement and community development funding.

### 3. WATERFRONT: Conflicting Land Uses, Poor Water Quality, Poorly Designed Parks and Beaches

#### Issue

Dorchester has approximately 10 miles of waterfront along Dorchester Bay and the Neponset River. Of this amount, less than a quarter is held as public open space, and many of these areas are poorly developed and maintained, or are adversely impacted by the Southeast Expressway, Morrissey Boulevard or adjacent industrial uses. Water quality in both the Bay and the Neponset River is poor, causing periodic beach closings during the summer months.

In addition large tracts of marginal or abandoned industrial land conflict with nearby public open space and residential areas and have no relation to their waterfront location.

### Strategy

#### a. Waterfront Revitalization

Marginal or conflicting waterfront industrial uses (that are not water related) should be phased out and public open space along the water's edge should be upgraded and expanded.

Water quality improvements are also necessary to enhance recreational use of the waterfront area. Because the MDC and Massachusetts DPW are major land holders along the waterfront, a large part of the responsibility for upgrading waterfront areas will fall on these two state agencies.

- 1) Waterfront Open Space - The Metropolitan District Commission should be encouraged to improve the quality of its facilities and maintenance along the waterfront. This can be accomplished through official requests from the City for MDC action, City-MDC staff meetings, and by interested community groups contacting the MDC directly or via their state legislators. Both City and community lobbying can be effective in obtaining appropriations for needed open space improvements.

Specific improvements required at MDC recreation facilities along the waterfront are as follows:

- Pattens Cove: This is a small saltmarsh area that has in recent years been adversely impacted by dumping and a culvert that interfered with natural tidal action. The MDC in 1974 constructed a new and adequate culvert, and has proposed that the Cove be developed as a landscaped recreation area, with landscaping, trails and picnic and sitting areas. After review by the Columbia-Savin Hill Civic Association, the MDC should be encouraged to proceed with landscaping plans immediately.
- Savin Hill Beach: This area (on the east side of Morrissey Boulevard below the Savin Hill Yacht Club) has been used for years as an impromptu boat launching area. A development plan should be prepared for this area with City, Columbia-Savin Hill Civic Association, and MDC input. Improvements could include landscaping, a small parking area, picnic tables and beach or boat launching facilities. State Public Access Board funds might be available if a boat launch facility is included.



- Malibu Beach: This facility requires extensive landscaping and screening along Morrissey Boulevard and the South-East expressway in order to mitigate traffic noise and improve the attractiveness of the area. The MDC should explore the possibility of creating dune-type berms along Morrissey Boulevard, and planting these with pitch and black pine, beach grasses, and other plant materials adaptable to sandy conditions. Periodic park and beach maintenance should be continued and increased in frequency.
- Tenean Beach: A development plan should be prepared for this area, with principal input from the Pope's Hill and Neponset Civic Associations, the City and the MDC. This facility could be redesigned to include additional landscaping, an improved parking area, acquisition of adjacent properties landscape screening along the highway embankment and improved picnic and sitting areas. A similar reconstruction was recently completed at Constitution Beach in East Boston, a facility that in many ways is similar to this one. Any construction should begin at the end of the swimming season.
- Neponset River Reservation: The General Court has appropriated approximately \$2.2 million for open space acquisition and development of the lower reaches of the Neponset River Reservation, including \$1.2 million for the development of the Schoolboy Track. Acquisition priorities should be on obtaining the few remaining links in the system that would permit continuous public access along the River, including the Penn Central right-of-way if it becomes available, the wooded ravine behind Fabreeka Corporation, and the vacant land between the Baker Mills and Central Avenue in Lower Mills.

Development priorities should include hiking and bike paths, and extensive landscaping, particularly where flood control projects and other development have destroyed the river's natural vegetation and contours.

- b. Industrial Location Pattern - In the Port Norfolk and Cedar Grove areas, the City-working closely with interested neighborhood groups and with the MDC-should relocate or phase out conflicting marginal industrial uses in favor of new open space and/or residential developments. Industrial concerns can then be relocated to some more suitable area, notably the proposed Alsen-Mapes industrial park or vacant industrial land along the Midlands Branch.

- c. The South-East Expressway - This highway abuts most of the waterfront beach and park facilities in Dorchester and adversely impacts these open space areas, as well as surrounding residential areas. The Massachusetts DPW should undertake a study of landscape and sound buffering techniques that could mitigate this impact.

1) Water Quality Improvements

Poor water quality in Dorchester Bay is largely a product of periodic overflows from the Dorchester Interceptor Sewer, which is the main combined storm-sanitary sewer paralleling the Bay shoreline between Neponset and Old Harbor. A number of options to mitigate or prevent continued overflows were presented in the 1972 Camp, Dresser & McKee report for the Massachusetts Division of Water Pollution Control. Unfortunately, little has been done to carry out these recommendations. In order to deal with this problem, a Task Force on Dorchester Bay Water Quality should be established (consisting of community residents, the City's Commissioner of Public Works, the Mayor's Environmental Affairs Coordinator, the MDC Commissioner, and the Director of the Division of Water Pollution Control, or their representatives), with a mandate to expedite water quality solutions.

4. COLUMBIA POINT REVITALIZATION

Issue

Last year, a broadly based task force presented a proposal to revitalize the Columbia Point Peninsula through the selective demolition of some existing housing, and the construction of 3,000 new or rehabilitated housing units. The proposal also included new landfill areas to accommodate the development, a new retail center, and new streets, parks, utilities and other public improvements. The estimated budget for the proposed development is \$152 million, with all but \$25 million to be assumed by private investment interests financed in part by the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency.

Numerous areas of uncertainty remain pertaining to programming, public and private costs, economic and environmental feasibility, marketing and administration. Availability of local, State, and Federal funding, and private investor interest are also critical to the success of the project.

In order to carry this proposal forward, the Federal Government must make a commitment to forgive the remaining outstanding debt on the Housing Project. Further commitments for a special Section 8 allocation will also be necessary. Once these commitments have been given, the City should undertake a Detailed Planning Effort, the scope of which would include the following phases:



- Marketing - The marketing phase would investigate how large the proposed development would have to be to create a market condition which would generate the desired social and economic mix; it would also determine the market conditions and absorption capacity for housing and commercial uses.
- Site and Environmental Planning - This phase would include detailed site planning and engineering, land-fill studies, and environmental impact assessment.
- Economic and Social Impact - This would consist of a thorough evaluation of the economic and social impacts of the proposed development (particularly on the rest of Dorchester and South Boston), including the impact on housing markets, social services, tax base, etc.
- Funding - This phase would investigate specific improvement costs, and the scope and costs of private and City capital improvements required to complete the proposed development.
- Implementation Strategy - This part of the study would investigate various options for implementation of the proposal, ranging from a cooperative City-MHFA-private enterprise effort to the establishment by the General Court of a special entity with all powers and resources required to undertake the development proposal. A flow chart would also be prepared, outlining the schedule of necessary steps and approvals required under each implementation option.

The budget for the Detailed Planning Effort is estimated at approximately \$215,000; the effort would take 12 months to complete.

E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

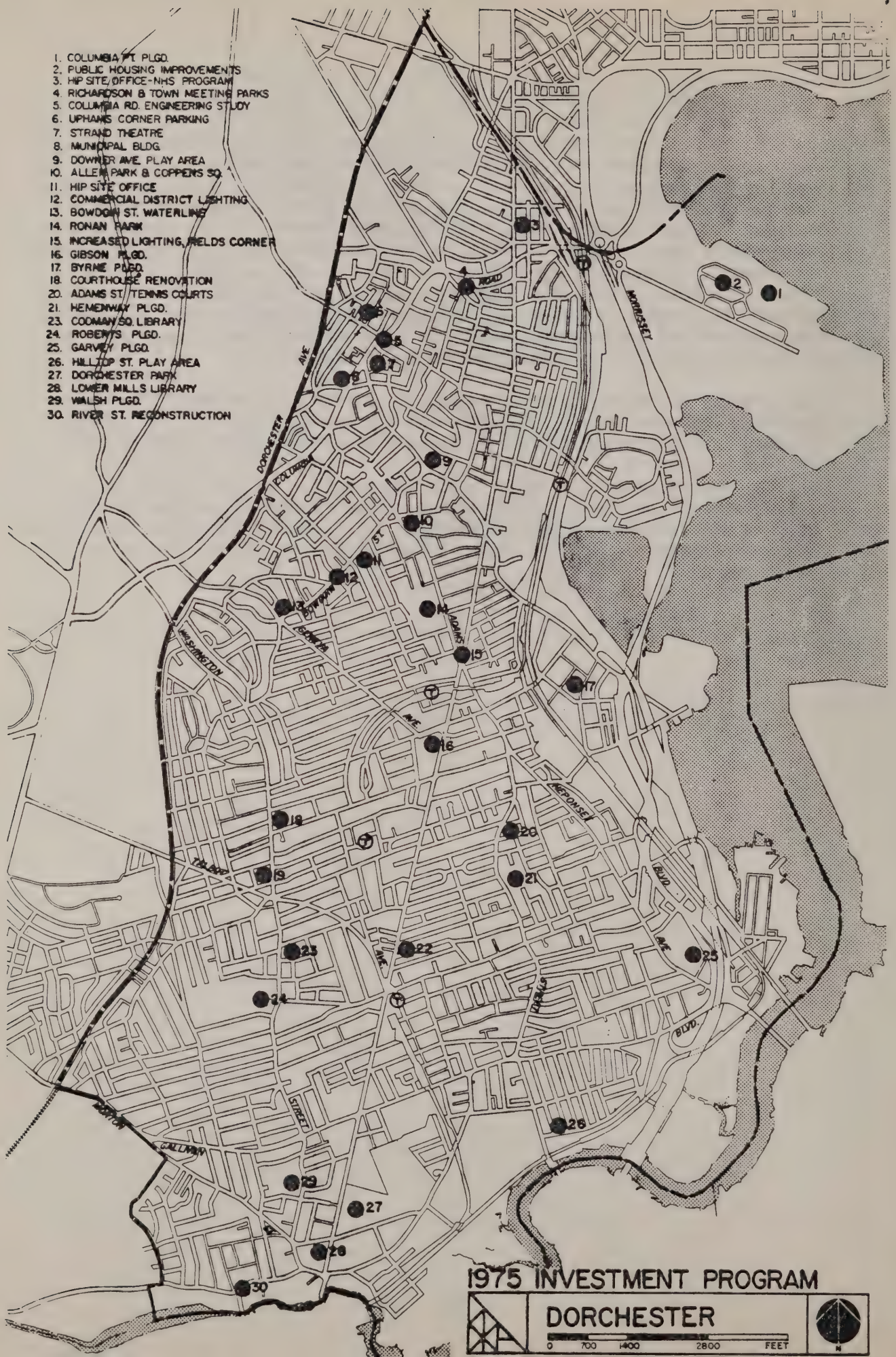
The 1975 investment program includes a strong effort to generate housing improvement through the establishment of three site offices for the Housing Improvement Program with a target of almost 600 buildings to be improved. Staff support and funding will be given to the Neighborhood Housing Services Corporation to assist their efforts in the target area near Edward Everett Square. New housing for the elderly is being proposed by community groups and developers for sites at Edison Green, Peabody Square, Neponset Circle and Lower Mills, but these projects are not yet funded. A program of street and sidewalk reconstruction, new residential street lighting and tree planting will complement private investment in maintaining attractive residential neighborhoods.

The program to improve older commercial centers will include off street parking, improved street lighting, and an attempt to accelerate State funding for reconstruction of the congested Uphams Corner intersection.

Capital improvements for major facilities include two new libraries, assistance to two health centers, renovation of the Strand Theatre for a performing arts center, improvements to the Dorchester District Courthouse and improvements at fifteen parks, playgrounds and squares throughout Dorchester.



1. COLUMBIA PT. PLGD.
2. PUBLIC HOUSING IMPROVEMENTS
3. HIP SITE OFFICE-NHS PROGRAM
4. RICHARDSON & TOWN MEETING PARKS
5. COLUMBIA RD. ENGINEERING STUDY
6. UPHAMS CORNER PARKING
7. STRAND THEATRE
8. MUNICIPAL BLDG.
9. DOWNER AVE. PLAY AREA
10. ALLEN PARK & COPPENS SQ.
11. HIP SITE OFFICE
12. COMMERCIAL DISTRICT LIGHTING
13. BOWDOIN ST. WATERLINE
14. RONAN PARK
15. INCREASED LIGHTING, FIELDS CORNER
16. GIBSON PLGD.
17. BYRNE PLGD.
18. COURTHOUSE RENOVATION
20. ADAMS ST. TENNIS COURTS
21. HEMENWAY PLGD.
23. COOMAN SQ. LIBRARY
24. ROBERTS PLGD.
25. GARVEY PLGD.
26. HILLTOP ST. PLAY AREA
27. DORCHESTER PARK
28. LOWER MILLS LIBRARY
29. WALSH PLGD.
30. RIVER ST. RECONSTRUCTION



1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

DORCHESTER

0 700 1400 2800 FEET





## F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

Future investment to preserve the residential neighborhoods should include the Housing Improvement Program. This should be continued until the private market and the banks and insurance companies recognize and support the basic strength of the neighborhoods and reduce the need for a special stimulation program. The program should be evaluated each year to determine whether there is a continuing need and to consider possible changes in operating procedures and funding levels. In addition, a program with a more substantial incentive should be developed and funded to encourage housing improvements where the housing market is not strong enough or incomes are too low to enable the Housing Improvement Program to encourage substantial improvements. The programs to board up or demolish vacant buildings and to improve vacant lots should be provided with sufficient funding to permit the City to promptly treat such problems as may occur in the future.

City capital improvements in the parks and playgrounds have focused on providing active athletic facilities and play equipment in all of the parks. Improvements in the scenic and aesthetic quality of the parks are also needed to increase the attractiveness of the adjacent residential areas and to encourage use of parks for more types of activities and by larger number of people, thus helping to reduce the vandalism problems of the past. Older school buildings should be improved with a continuing emphasis on expanding community school type activities which serve all age groups and generate more intensive utilization of the facilities. Assistance to community organizations such as the health centers should be provided by making available surplus space in public buildings.

The Commercial Center Lighting Program should be continued to include Adams Village and Peabody Square, but only if smaller lighting fixtures more appropriate to the size of the area can be used. If the Storefront Rehabilitation Program proves successful, it should be expanded to include other commercial centers.



# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Residential Disinvestment	Housing Improvement Program	580 buildings; 3 site offices/\$700,000	600 buildings/year
	Rental Assistance through leased housing (Section 8) to stimulate rehab.		100 units/year for existing buildings
	Boarding of Vacant Buildings	50 buildings/\$62,000	50 buildings
	Demolition of Unsound Buildings	150 buildings/\$450,000	75 buildings
	Vacant Lot Program	100 lots/\$100,000	100 lots
	Assistance to Neigh- borhood Housing Services	\$50,000	
	Capital Improvements (to encourage resi- dent & investor confidence)		
		Park Renovations Columbia Pt. Plgd. \$368,000 Richardson & Town Meeting Parks \$100,000 Allen Pk.&CoppensSq. 75,000 Gibson Plgd. 50,000 Byrne Plgd. 80,000	Park Renovations Ronan Park Landscaping, re- taining walls Roberts Plgd. Washington St. entrance, landscaping Dorchester Park rehab. Peabody Sq. Fencing, landsc.

# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Residential Disinvestment (cont)	Capital Improvements (cont.)	<p><u>Park Renovations (cont.)</u>  Downer Ave. Tot Lot \$16,000  Hemenway Plgd. 20,000  Ronan Park 20,000  Walsh Plgd. 100,000  Dorchester Pk. 155,000  Garvey Plgd. 90,000  Roberts Plgd. 440,000  Thetford Ave. Plgd. 12,000  Ripley Plgd. 17,000</p> <p><u>New Parks:</u>  Hilltop St. Pk. 64,000  Hemenway School Site  Tennis Courts 36,000</p> <p><u>New Libraries:</u>  Codman Sq. \$1,100,000  Lower Mills 800,000</p> <p><u>Public Works:</u>  Street, sidewalk, reconstr.  street lights, tree plant.</p>	<p><u>Park Renovations (cont.)</u>  Pattens Cove (MDC) Renovation  Malibu Beach "  Savin Hill Beach "  Tennean Beach "  Neponset River Res. "  "</p> <p><u>New Parks:</u>  Bellflower St. Park</p> <p><u>New Libraries:</u>  Upham's Corner</p> <p><u>Schools:</u>  Dorchester High conversion  to Community School  Mather School site improvements.</p> <p><u>Public Works:</u>  Street, sidewalk reconstr.,  street lights, street trees</p> <p>Codman Sq. Health Center</p> <p>Port Norfolk Sewer &amp; Drainage  reconstruction</p>
	Encourage Dorchester Public Relations Campaign		



# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Residential Disinvestment	Encourage historic preservation	Bicentennial Markers \$5,000	
	Maximize benefits from private and non-city investment	Lower Mills Elderly Edison Green Elderly Neponset Health Center/ Elderly Housing Peabody Square Elderly  Alsen-Mapes Industrial Park	
	Improve Public Transportation	Ashmont Station Improve. \$1,200,000	
	Increase availability of mortgage financing.		
Commercial Area Deterioration	Improve lighting	High intensity lighting at Lower Mills, Bowdoin St. & additional lighting at Fields Corner	Adams Village Peabody Square
	Improve Parking	Codman Sq. \$176,000 Uphams Corner 85,000	Bowdoin Street Lower Mills
	Storefront Rehab. Program	Uphams Corner \$ 25,000 (possibly other areas if merchants organize)	Bowdoin Street Codman Square Lower Mills

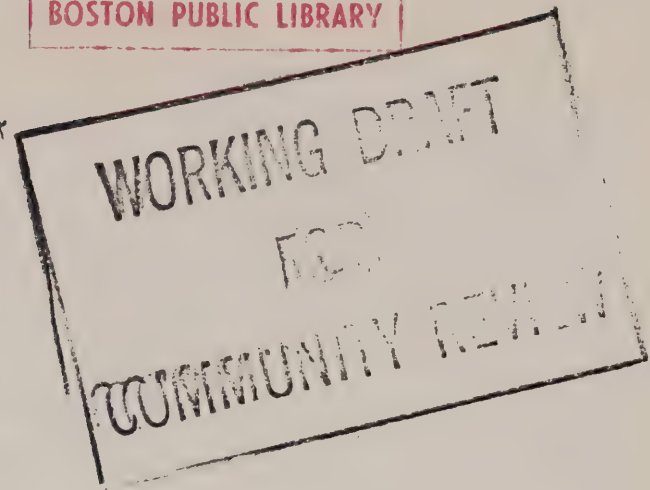
# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Commercial Area Deterioration	Reduce traffic congestion	Uphams Corner/ \$60,000 Columbia Rd. Engineering WK	Dorchester Avenue Urban Systems redesign and recons.
Quality of Waterfront	Reduction of commer. space in older dist. & areas of strip dev.		
	Phase out industrial/ commercial uses not appropriate to waterfront		Acquisition of waterfront land or easements for public access
	Improve water quality		Improve Dorchester Interceptor Sewer
	Reduce Expressway impacts		
	Increase amount and quality of public open space along Bay and River	Hallet Street Schoolboy Track facility M.D.C. Neponset River acquisition funds	





M3/B16  
RA  
75/7  
pt. 4



EAST BOSTON

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June, 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.	SHORT HISTORY	[17]
B.	EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	[41]
	Overview	
	Neighborhoods	
	Jeffries Point	
	Central/Maverick Square	
	Eagle Hill	
	Paris Street Flats	
	Harbor View	
	Orient Heights	
C.	PAST PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT	[112]
D.	PLANNING ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	[133]
	1. Negative influences on quality of residential neighborhoods	
	2. Decline of neighborhood commercial centers	
	3. Negative impacts of regional transportation systems	
	4. Control of new development	
	5. Protection of natural resources	
E.	1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[183]
F.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS	[207]
G.	APPENDICES (Maps)	[217]
	1. Public Facilities 1968-74	
	2. Public Improvements 1968-74	
	3. Housing Programs 1968-74	
	4. Private Investment 1968-74	





## INTRODUCTION

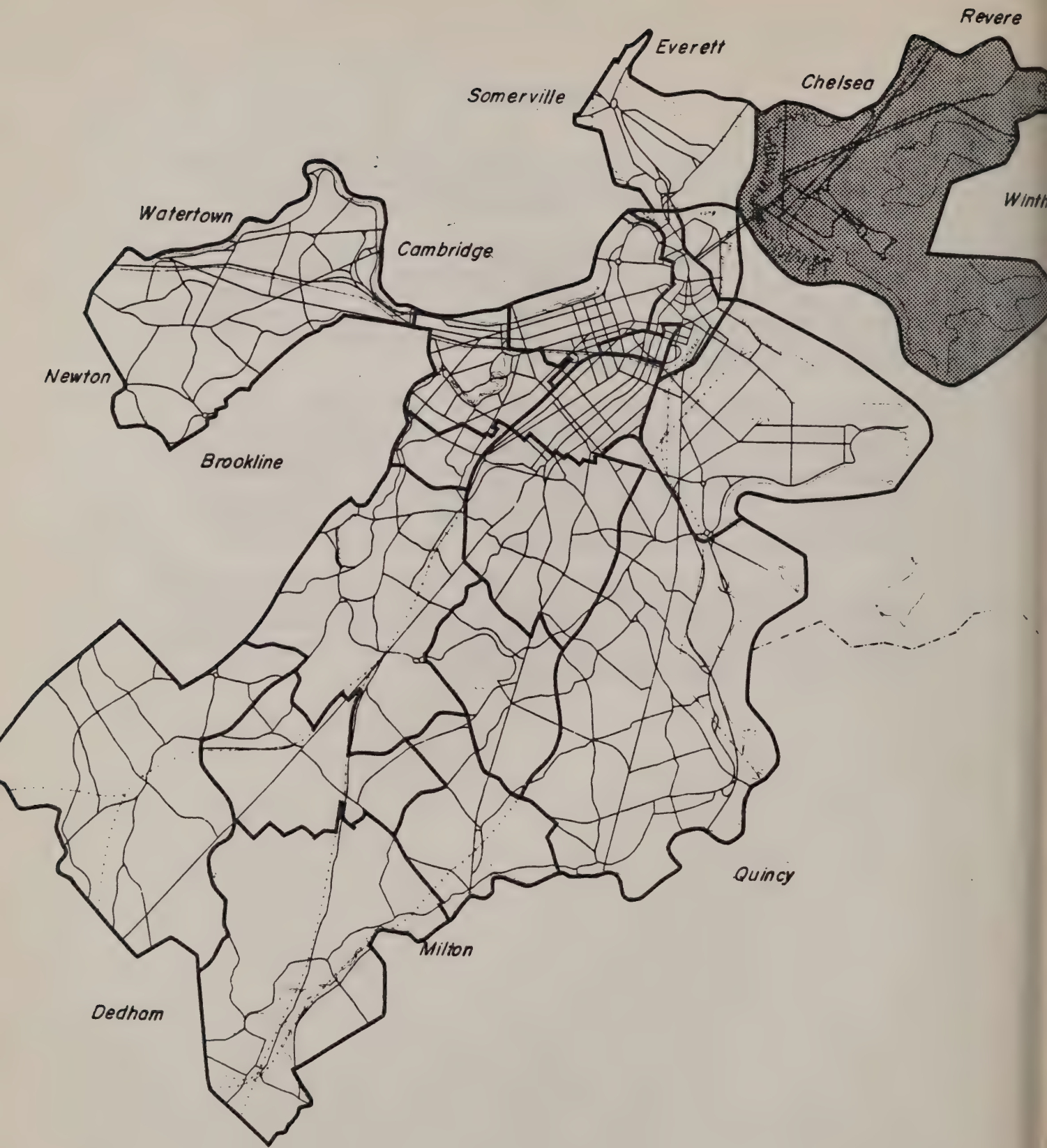
This report prepared by the East Boston District Planner is a draft document meant to structure discussion among residents and City representatives on planning strategies and investment needs.

Toward this end, it establishes a base of population, income and housing data as well as a listing and analysis of recent past public and private investment in East Boston. This information can be used by the District Planner and others involved in the planning process, by neighborhood residents, Little City Hall staff and other City agencies and departments.

Second, it offers an analysis of the major issues which confront the community along with recommended strategies to address these issues. These strategies should form the basis of discussion for community residents for the Community Development Revenue Sharing and Capital Improvement participation process as well as for involvement in issues which are not addressed by City expenditures such as rezoning, private development or State funded programs.

Third, the report recognizes that strategies are not self-fulfilling and makes recommendations for investments, both public and private, which are necessary to help carry through the recommended strategies. It also sets forth a yearly work program which the community planner can follow to achieve the desired results.





EAST BOSTON



## A. SHORT HISTORY

Noddle's Island was annexed to the City of Boston in 1637 but remained an isolated agricultural area supplying fresh meat and wood to the City for nearly 200 years. In 1833, General William Sumner organized the East Boston Company which bought the island, changed its name to East Boston, and established a ferry service to the downtown area. The Company began to develop waterfront oriented industrial uses and provide railroad service to the north. East Boston was also promoted in this period as a summer resort. An orderly grid pattern of streets was laid out, the 80 room Maverick House hotel was constructed in Maverick Square and fine houses with hilltop views of the harbor were built in the Eagle Hill and Jeffries Point areas. Many of these houses remain today.

From 1840 to 1865, the needs of international shipping spurred the rapid development of East Boston. Famous clipper ships were constructed and outfitted, and sailed routes to California, the East Indies and China. The Boston terminal for England's Cunard Lines was established in East Boston in 1840. The ability to transfer goods directly from ship to railroad was an important asset and the addition of a terminal for the Grand Junction Railroad gave East Boston direct connections to all the manufacturing centers of New England. The population climbed from 1,455 persons in 1840 to 20,572 in 1865, with large suburban homes being developed on the hills and more modest dwellings in the area around Maverick Square.

The decline of wooden shipbuilding caused the exodus of skilled craftsmen from East Boston at a time when many Irish immigrants were arriving to take their place. Housing for the immigrants was made available by the subdivision of the existing housing and the construction of tenements. As the population continued to grow and the area began to lose its spacious suburban quality, wealthier families began to leave East Boston. Around 1880, the Breed's Island (now Orient Heights) section of East Boston was opened to development and more expensive single family homes were developed. The pace of development was slow and the last lots were not sold off until 1912. Successive waves of immigrants, primarily Jews and then Italians, pushed the population of East Boston to a peak level of approximately 60,000 which was maintained from 1916 through 1935. The Italian immigrants formed a strong community structure in East Boston which continues to be the area's predominant cultural influence.

After 70 years of ferry service, East Boston was connected to downtown by a subway tunnel in 1905. Further transportation developments, the airport in 1923 and the Sumner Tunnel in 1934 planted the seeds for future community problems when the rapid expansion of aviation and postwar suburban development caused tremendous growth in the use of these facilities. Commuter and airport traffic provided the primary reasons for the development, from 1949-1961, of airport access roads, the expressway through East Boston and the Callahan Tunnel. The introduction of jet aircraft during the 1960's added a new dimension to East Boston's problems with regional transportation facilities.



From 1940 to about 1970, population declined in East Boston as a result of factors which have affected most urban communities. Contributing to the general pattern of out-migration of families to suburban areas were such factors as increase in automobile ownership, improved highways, a desire for greater open space, the decline of some urban industries, the relocation of other expanding industries to modern suburban facilities and the attractiveness of newer suburban schools with large amounts of recreation space. In addition, East Boston suffered from the impact of air pollution, noise and congestion created by a growing airport and by increasing commuter traffic, as well as from the unpleasant appearance of declining industrial property adjacent to residential areas.

The physical development of East Boston occurred almost entirely within the period from 1835-1915. The major physical changes since 1915 have been the growth of regional transportation facilities, particularly the tunnels, McClellan Highway and the airport. The way of life of the people, what they expect and need from a residential environment, and the economics of the early industrial base have changed substantially since 1915. East Boston is now faced with adapting the physical environment which it has inherited to the needs of a modern residential community.

## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

### OVERVIEW

With its population reduced to approximately 39,000 people and just recently beginning to increase again, East Boston today is a stable community. Most residents live in family groups, 91% as opposed to 78% City-wide, and except for a higher percentage of young adults leaving the community, East Boston's age distribution is similar to that of the rest of the City with slightly fewer elderly and slightly more children than the City average.

The median family income in East Boston was somewhat less than that for the City in 1970. This is due more to a comparative lack of upper income families than to a concentration of very low income families. Census data show that East Boston's wage earners tend to hold lesser skilled jobs or jobs in which skills are acquired through apprenticeship. This is a reflection of a level of formal education lower than the City average. Statistics indicate that the youth of East Boston continue to receive less education in terms of years spent in school and consequently have less access to the kinds of professional, technical, clerical and "service" type jobs which are increasing most rapidly in the Boston economy.

Rent levels in East Boston are substantially lower than the City average. The value of owner-occupied homes reported in the 1970 U.S. Census was also low with 52% estimated to be worth less than \$15,000 while only 25% City-wide were in this category. The vast majority of residential structures in East Boston are over 50 years old with only 12% built after 1939. While these dwellings represent an important low-cost housing resource, many of them are in need of substantial repairs.

East Boston has a strong community structure which has been enhanced by a number of factors. Home ownership is high for an urban area. The presence of a resident owner in over 80% of the residential structures containing 1-4 apartments greatly strengthens the community and encourages a higher level of maintenance and community concern. Both owners and tenants tend to live in the same place for longer periods of time than in other parts of the City. The strong ethnic nature of the Italian community also contributes to the sense of neighborhood.

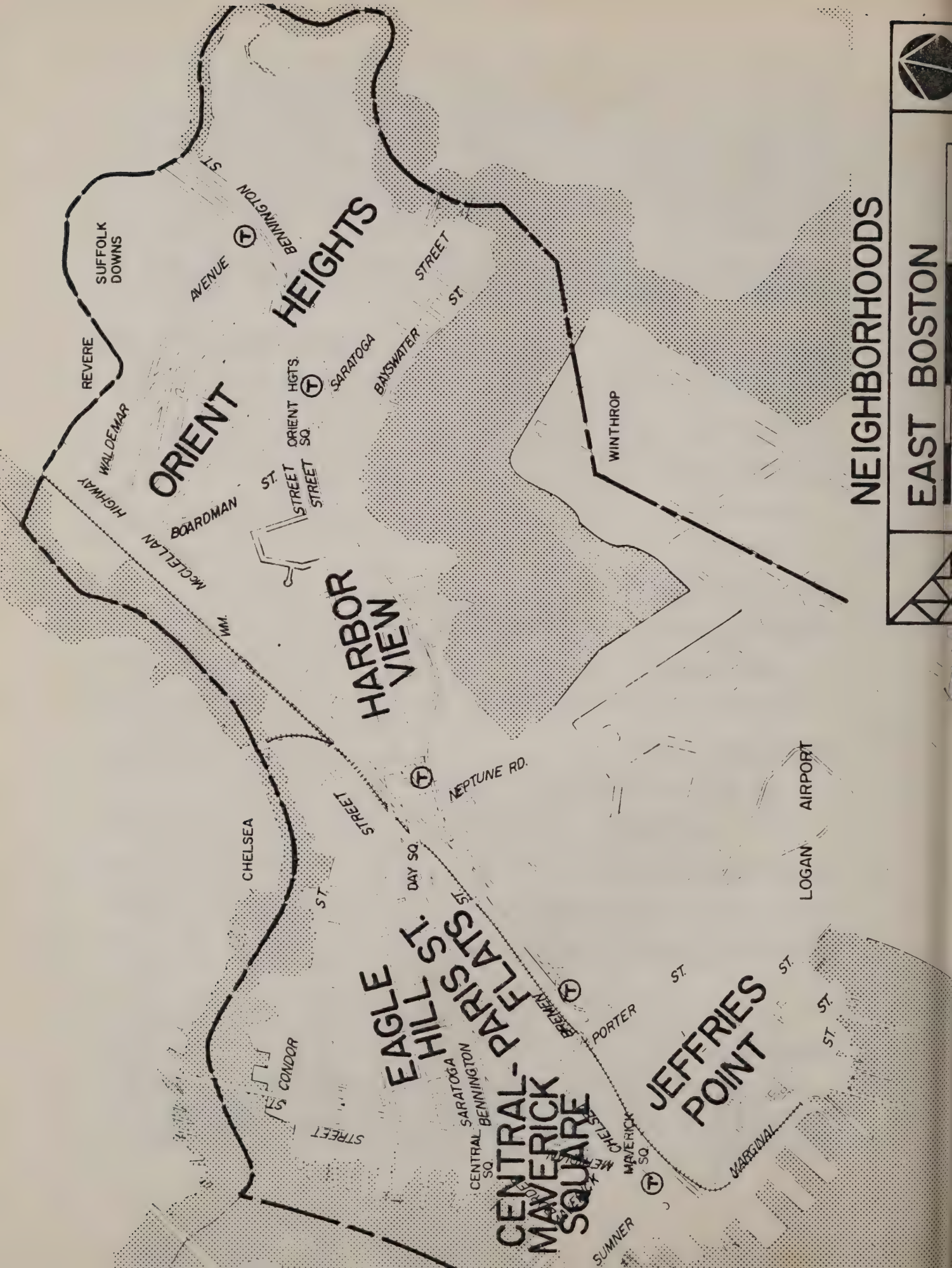
The following statistics from the 1970 U.S. Census indicate some of the factors which distinguish East Boston from the City as a whole:

	<u>East Boston</u>	<u>City</u>
Living in family groups	91 %	78 %
Age groups		
Under age 15	25.4%	23.9%
Ages 15-34	28.1%	33.9%
Ages 35-59	30.1%	24.7%
Ages 60 and over	16.4%	17.5%
In same residence for over 10 years		
Owner-occupants	72 %	58 %
Renters	32 %	19 %
Median family income	\$ 8,620	\$ 9,133
Families earning \$15,000 or more	12 %	18 %
Families earning less than \$5,000	22 %	22 %
Median monthly contract rent	\$ 67	\$ 98
Median value of owner-occupied units	\$14,721	\$19,600
Units needing repairs in excess of \$1,000	42 %	29 %

#### NEIGHBORHOODS

East Boston is a peninsula divided into a residential community and an international airport. The community may be described in terms of six neighborhoods: Jeffries Point, Central/Maverick Square, Eagle Hill, Paris Street Flats, Harbor View and Orient Heights.





NEIGHBORHOODS

EAST BOSTON

ORIENT

HEIGHTS

HARBOR  
VIEW

EAGLE  
HILL ST.

CENTRAL-  
MAVERICK  
SQUARE

JEFFRIES  
POINT

LOGAN  
AIRPORT

SUFFOLK  
DOWNS

WINTHROP

NEPTUNE RD.

MARGINAL

AVENUE

BENNINGTON ST

STREET

ST

SARATOGA

BANSWATER

ORIENT HGTS

STREET

ST

BOARDMAN

MCLELLAN

WALDEMAR

CHelsea

ST

DAY SQ

ST

PARIS ST

CENTRAL BENNINGTON SQ

PORTER

ST

ST

ST

ST

SUMNER

MAVERICK SQ

CHelsea

MAVERICK

ST

## 1. Jeffries Point

Jeffries Point at the southern end of East Boston is bounded by the Penn Central Railroad on the west, Porter Street and Logan Airport on the north, and Boston Harbor on the south and east. It is one of the oldest and most densely settled areas in the community. Two and three decker rowhouses cover the hill between the airport and Marginal Street and overlook the harbor and downtown Boston. Although not subject to overflights, Jeffries Point residents are affected by aircraft ground noise at the airport.

Along the waterfront are located scattered airport-related industries, Bethlehem Steel, and Piers 1-4. Because many of the old waterfront industries have given way to less intensive uses, attention has recently focused on reuses of waterfront property. The City has encouraged new uses which support the predominantly residential character of Jeffries Point and has acquired and developed a 4-acre park at the end of the Point. Massport, on the other hand, has proposed a container shipping facility at Piers 1-4, a reuse which could be disruptive to the neighborhood.

## 2. Central/Maverick Square

The Central/Maverick Square neighborhood lies between Jeffries Point and the Inner Harbor and consists of Central Square, in many ways the nerve center of East Boston, Maverick Square, a transportation node and secondary shopping center, and the residential community between the two squares. Since the 19th Century when the area was the locus of intense industrial and commercial activity, it has seen the decline of its industry and the growth of its use as a regional transportation link. Meridian Street carries traffic between Boston and Chelsea, and the Sumner-Callahan Tunnels carry traffic between Boston, the airport and the North Shore.

Central Square serves as a magnet for shoppers from East Boston and to some extent from Winthrop and Revere. It has a modern shopping plaza, a wide variety of stores and convenient parking. In the center of the square is a park and nearby are a library, a neighborhood health center, and several other public facilities. Maverick Square is just a few blocks south of Central Square on Meridian Street. Although smaller than Central Square, it has an MBTA station, Little City Hall, and convenience shops which attract people from nearby neighborhoods. As a result of new housing developments on the waterfront, its importance will be increasing in the future.

The residential neighborhood between the two squares consists of the 414-unit Maverick Housing Project and 3-story brick or frame rowhouses with straight front or bay windows. Almost 75% of the homes in this area are in need of substantial



repairs but some rehabilitation and a good deal of new housing development is occurring. An 11-acre waterfront park is being acquired and developed by the City and the 300-unit Sumner Street Elderly Housing Development will soon be completed. A 319-unit mixed income development is planned for the Border Street area just below Central Square and the City has proposed a mixed housing-commercial-open space development on the waterfront below Maverick Square (NDP II).

3. Eagle Hill

Eagle Hill is located north of Central Square and Bennington Street and runs from the Inner Harbor to the Chelsea Creek/Day Square area. The neighborhood is characterized by three decker rowhouses which have been occupied by the same families for several generations. While less than 40% of the units in Eagle Hill are in need of substantial repairs, each spring a bustle of painting and sprucing up activity takes place there. The neighborhood is also experiencing a burst of new housing development with the construction of Shore Plaza East, a 380-unit low and moderate income housing development, and Landfall West, a 59-unit elderly housing development. In addition, construction has begun on the new Barnes Middle School on Border Street which is scheduled to be completed by fall of 1976. This will be a community school with its recreational and educational facilities open to all East Boston residents.

4. Paris Street Flats

The Paris Street Flats section is a triangular area bounded by Porter, Bremen and Bennington Streets. Two of its sides are further defined by the East Boston Expressway and the Penn Central Railroad. Most of the homes in this neighborhood are three and four story rowhouses with little or no open space. Almost 75% of them are in need of substantial repairs. Residents near Day Square are in the flight path of Runway 15R and those along Bremen Street are threatened by the encroachment of air freight, rent-a-car and other airport-related industrial uses.

5. Harbor View

Harbor View extends along Bennington Street from Day Square to Orient Heights. Although sometimes confined to that section east of Day Square and south of Bennington Street which really has a "harbor view", our definition also includes the Neptune Road area and the section north of Bennington Street where the 402 apartments of Brandywine Village are located. One and two family homes contain half of all the dwelling units in the neighborhood. Most homes have yards and many of the streets are lined with trees. The Neptune Road area, once the entrance to Wood Island Park, still reflects the stately character of the neighborhood's past. Today Harbor View suffers from the disruption of the MBTA tracks which cut through it, from the noise of the airport, and from the taking of Wood Island Park for Runway 15R.

## 6. Orient Heights

Orient Heights at the northeastern end of East Boston is characterized by the prominent hill, formerly Breed's Hill, on the northwest side of Bennington Street and the gently sloping topography leading to the Bayswater shore southeast of Bennington Street. Prominent landmarks are the gold-crowned tower originally intended as the pedestal for the statue of the "Madonna of the Universe" on the top of the hill, and the cross on the end of the hill visible from McClellan Highway. The neighborhood is bounded to the west by the Chelsea Creek and to the east by Belle Isle Inlet. To the north is the City of Revere and to the south is filled land below Boardman Street.

Orient Heights is a pleasant residential community with sloping, quiet streets and single family homes with small yards and beautiful views in all directions. Although it includes the 354-unit Orient Heights Housing Project, one and two family structures contain 44% of the dwelling units, and 88% of the structures with 1-4 units are owner-occupied. The median income of \$9,400 is the highest in East Boston and only 18% of its dwelling units need substantial repairs. Although the Bayswater section is heavily impacted by aircraft noise, Orient Heights remains one of East Boston's most livable areas.



# COMPARATIVE STATISTICS - EAST BOSTON

(1970 U.S. Census Data)

<u>POPULATION</u>	<u>Jeffries Point</u>	<u>Central/ Maverick Sq.</u>	<u>Eagle Hill</u>	<u>Paris St. Flats</u>	<u>Harbor View</u>	<u>Orient Heights</u>	<u>East Boston</u>	<u>City of Boston</u>
Total in 1970	6,798	3,445	12,737	4,058	5,111	6,724	38,873	639,803
Change from '60	-21%	-23%	-13%	-18%	+26%	-6%	-11%	-8%
Total Black in 1970	14	165	6	10	31	100	326	104,206
<u>AGE GROUPS</u>								
Under Age 15	1,628	1,037	3,395	911	1,341	1,573	9,984	152,541
Change from '60	-30%	-27%	-15%	-32%	+24%	-24%	-18%	-11%
Ages 15-34	1,893	949	3,668	1,064	1,525	1,821	10,920	217,068
Change from '60	-21%	-21%	-12%	-24%	+41%	0%	-10%	-11%
Ages 35-59	2,160	943	3,749	1,321	1,450	2,065	11,698	157,865
Change from '60	-20%	-21%	-14%	-19%	-8%	-6%	-15%	-24%
Ages 60 and Over	1,113	514	1,925	762	795	1,265	6,374	112,080
Change from '60	-12%	-21%	-5%	0%	+46%	+23%	-7%	-9%
<u>INCOME</u>								
Median Family	\$8,205	\$7,100	\$8,801	\$8,023	\$9,084	\$9,405	\$8,620	\$9,133
Families under \$5,000	25%	38%	19%	30%	13%	20%	22%	22%
<u>HOUSING</u>								
Occupied Units	3,422	1,190	4,144	1,461	1,613	2,144	13,574	217,623
Occupied Units in Structures With 1-4 Units	77%	57%	97%	98%	84%	79%	87%	61%
Owner-Occupied Structures With 1-4 Units	84%	71%	82%	78%	69%	88%	81%	81%
Units Needing Substantial Repairs (in excess of \$1,000)	830	960	1,680	1,150	790	390	5,800	67,102
Market Condition	Fair-Strong	Fair	Fair-Strong	Fair	Fair-Strong	Strong	Fair-Strong	Stable

## C. PAST PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT

### PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

The major thrust of the City's capital investment from 1968-1974 has been toward strengthening neighborhoods through the construction or renovation of community facilities, parks, and streets. The City spent \$679,676 in the renovation of playground facilities at American Legion Playground, East Boston Stadium, Souza Park, Noyes Playground, Paris Street Playground and the passive recreation area at Brophy Park. It improved the Sumner and Lamson Playground and McLean Playground facilities at a cost of \$63,281. The Paris Street pool was constructed at a cost of \$700,000. Renovations were made on a street hockey facility at Jeffries Point, on the Paris Street Gym, the East Boston Health Center and Police District 7 at a cost of \$795,000. In addition, 3.6 miles of street construction, 5.0 miles of sidewalk construction and 4.7 miles of sewer and water work was completed.

Public effort in housing increased during the 1968-1974 period. However, since most of this investment was in the form of mortgage commitments for the new developments now under construction, the effects are yet to come.

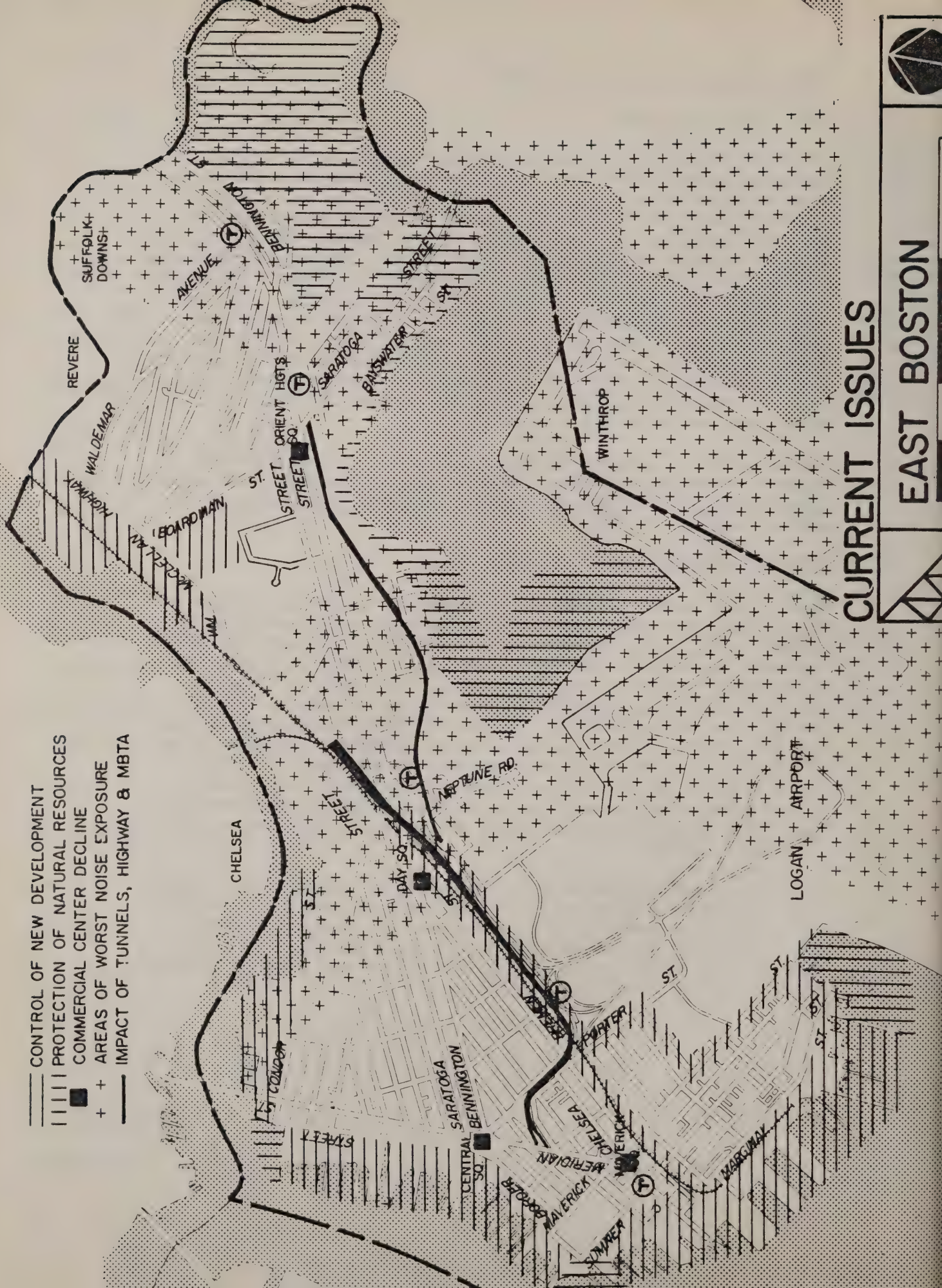
### PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

Perhaps due in part to public investment in residential neighborhoods, East Boston has seen an increase in private investment over the past five years. A majority of this investment has been in housing construction and rehabilitation. In addition to the Sumner Street Elderly Housing Development which involved mostly public monies, two housing developments were begun with mostly private monies--the Shore Plaza East and Landfall West developments of 380 and 59 units respectively--and mortgage commitments were given on at least one other private development, Boston East. Private rehabilitation of one, two and three family homes is occurring in almost every neighborhood. Although the individual homeowner may spend only a few thousand dollars, the number of homes being rehabilitated is impressive.

A review of building permits for construction in excess of \$10,000 from 1968 to 1974 reveals that at the same time private investment is occurring in housing, it is also occurring on a lesser scale in the commercial, industrial and institutional sectors. A significant part of this investment is in airport-related uses such as warehousing, air freight and rent-a-car operations.



- CONTROL OF NEW DEVELOPMENT
- ||||| PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES
- COMMERCIAL CENTER DECLINE
- + AREAS OF WORST NOISE EXPOSURE
- IMPACT OF TUNNELS, HIGHWAY & MBTA



## CURRENT ISSUES

EAST BOSTON



## D. PLANNING ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

### 1. NEGATIVE INFLUENCES ON QUALITY OF RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

#### Issue

Almost all issues in East Boston relate in one way or another to the issue of protecting and enhancing residential neighborhoods. Today the neighborhoods are faced with a number of problems. Age and deferral of needed repairs have led to the deterioration of much of the housing stock; a high percentage of homes are in need of substantial repairs. There is also a lack of variety in the types of housing available which has been one cause for young families with rising incomes to leave East Boston. Vacant lots are poorly maintained and unprotected property has been vandalized. Old industries exist on the borders of residential neighborhoods and new industries, such as air freight and rent-a-car operations, threaten to further disrupt these neighborhoods. Finally, despite recent substantial public investments, East Boston still has a need for more and improved public facilities.

#### Strategies

Although some private rehabilitation and new construction is already occurring in East Boston, the City should use a combination of rehabilitation and code enforcement incentives to preserve and upgrade the existing housing stock. The Mayor's Housing Improvement Program (MHIP) can be used by owner-occupants of 1-6 unit structures to bring their buildings up to code standards. Code enforcement can be used if a few property owners refuse to correct serious code violations in an area where voluntary rehab efforts are making headway. Abandoned and unsafe structures should be torn down and the property cleared under the City's Demolition Program.

The City and the community should encourage the broadening of housing options by supporting moderate amounts of new housing construction in a variety of types, sizes and costs. There are still a few areas in East Boston where one and two family detached homes can be built. With the trend toward families having fewer children and consequently more income to spend on housing, there is also a need for one and two bedroom middle income (and some upper income) apartments. Some of these opportunities will be available with the opening of Shore Plaza East, Landfall West and the Sumner Street Elderly Housing Development. Others can be provided in the proposed NDP II development on the waterfront and in developments like the Boston East proposal on Border Street and the CDC proposal on Marginal Street.



Confidence in the value of upgrading residential property should be strengthened by both public and private efforts to clean up vacant lots and reduce vandalism. Youth activity programs combined with the construction of youth centers in areas now lacking them would provide youngsters with constructive rather than destructive outlets for their energies. Attention should be given to the feasibility of using foot patrolmen, security guards or resident caretakers at public buildings, construction sites, parks and other areas subject to vandalism. The City-funded Vacant Lot Program can be used to clean up vacant lots on a temporary basis. For the longer run, private owners of vacant lots should be urged to properly maintain them or when the situation warrants the City should acquire those appropriate for neighborhood use. Vacant lots owned by the City should be better maintained or transferred to abutters for their care and use.

Industrial uses should be located away from residential neighborhoods to reduce the traffic, noise and negative visual impact they have upon these areas. The proximity of industrial and residential uses was warranted in the pre-automobile era when people wanted to live as near as possible to their place of work; but, today priorities have changed. Although industries and their jobs are needed in East Boston, efforts should be made through zoning and the development of an industrial park to encourage intensified industrial activity within areas separate or buffered from residential areas and to discourage or prohibit it within neighborhoods.

Finally, the City should enhance the quality of East Boston's neighborhoods by providing more recreation and open space amenities and by making capital improvements in strategic areas. Older residents have watched their community slowly lose the amenities that made East Boston such a good place to live when they were young. The trees that once lined many streets are now gone and Wood Island, the 65-acre park designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, has been taken by Massport for a runway. As a result of such losses, East Boston residents have only half as much open space per capita as the rest of the City. The City has responded by planting trees along streets, by making improvements to existing recreation facilities and by committing funds to the acquisition and development of two new waterfront parks. These efforts must be continued and other capital improvements made as well. Streets should be resurfaced, sidewalks reconstructed, and water and sewer improvements made in the areas of greatest need. Attention should be given to the rehabilitation of fire stations, libraries and other public facilities. Above all, substantial investments should be made in the rehabilitation/soundproofing or replacement of school buildings. Such measures can begin to upgrade the quality of East Boston's residential neighborhoods and to maintain private investment confidence.

## 2. DECLINE OF NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL CENTERS

### Issue

Improved highways, increased automobile ownership, and the development of "one stop" shopping at large suburban malls have weakened the viability of the neighborhood commercial center. Yet it still performs an important function, providing a convenience for some, a necessity for others, and adding to the quality of life in an urban community.

There are four shopping areas in East Boston: Central Square, Maverick Square, Day Square and Orient Heights shopping centers. Although each has a few distinct problems, they share many problems in common. They tend to consist of small stores without a great variety of merchandise under one roof. The buildings in which they are located are generally old, presenting certain structural problems for modern merchandising techniques, and need exterior facelifting to make them more visually attractive. The layout of the buildings, streets and sidewalks do not facilitate convenient pedestrian and vehicular circulation. The lack of sufficient off-street parking leads to double parking and traffic congestion which further reduce shopping convenience, and crime and vandalism present a constant threat to their viability.

### Strategies

To revitalize these local shopping centers, the joint effort of the public and private sectors will be required. The merchants themselves must take the lead but the City can make significant contributions. Toward this end, the City has begun a Neighborhood Commercial Center Revitalization Program which will focus in the forthcoming year on working with merchants in Central and Maverick Squares. Surveys and market studies are planned to help identify problems and suggest solutions. Technical assistance will be made available to businessmen who want to improve their business methods. Design guidelines will be prepared to assist merchants in coordinating storefront rehabilitation in each shopping center and a program of financial incentives for such rehabilitation should be developed. Steps have already been taken to reduce crime and vandalism with the institution of police foot patrols during nighttime hours in all four shopping centers and with the installation of improved lighting in Maverick Square. New lighting should be installed in the other commercial areas in the future. A new off-street parking lot will be constructed on Porter Street near Central Square and more off-street parking should be provided for commercial areas. Parking meters have been repaired and on-street parking regulations are beginning to be more strictly enforced so as to reduce congestion caused by double parking. Funds have been allocated for a study of major street, sidewalk and signal changes to improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation in Central and Maverick Squares, the results of which will be hopefully implemented through the Urban Systems Program in the next fiscal year.



### 3. NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

#### Issue

The development of regional transportation facilities which occurred after the residential community of East Boston was well established, has had a significant negative impact upon the quality of neighborhood life. The tunnels, highway and MBTA line disrupt the physical continuity of neighborhoods, generate noise and air pollution, and add to traffic and parking congestion on local streets. With the expansion of Logan Airport has come a myriad of challenges to the very survival of the residential community. Sections of East Boston are heavily impacted by aircraft noise and pollution. Massport purchases of property in abutting residential neighborhoods has created investor uncertainty and in some cases led to disinvestment and housing abandonment. Airport-related industries such as air freight and rent-a-car operations have been attracted to boundary areas between the airport and the Paris Street Flats and Jeffries Point neighborhoods, further disrupting the residential character of these areas. In addition, Massport has proposed the location of a container shipping facility at Piers 1-4 which could be incompatible with adjacent residential development.

#### Strategies

The community, the City and the State must work together to reduce the negative impacts caused by these transportation systems. A comprehensive circulation plan should be conducted addressing in particular the traffic and parking problems caused by the Sumner and Callahan Tunnels, the McClellan Highway, the MBTA, and the airport. Massport must be made more responsive to the needs of the East Boston community. Noise abatement measures, including the soundproofing of schools, must be undertaken. Equitable arrangements must be made for the relocation of Neptune Road residents, now living at the end of a major runway. Further expansion of the airport must be halted and properties owned by Massport in residential neighborhoods should be sold to residents of those neighborhoods. Buffer zones should be created between the airport and residential areas. In all its future work, Massport should be made to include community participation in its master planning process and to act only in accordance with plans achieved through a consensus involving the City, East Boston residents, and airport users.

### 4. CONTROL OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

#### Issue

Due to the changing nature of the regional economy and the general decline of industry in the inner city, East Boston has found itself with a number of underutilized properties that have development potential. Most of these are along the

waterfront and on the boundaries of the airport. A major issue for the future will be whether or not these properties will be developed in a fashion that is compatible with adjacent residential neighborhoods.

#### Strategies

The City should continue to plan for this potential development and insure that it is compatible with adjacent residential development. Working with the community, the City should inventory these sites, develop a plan for their future use, and take the most feasible measures for insuring that development on them occurs according to the generally accepted plan. Such measures would include enforcement of existing zoning when appropriate, rezoning, and acquisition of strategic development sites.

### 5. PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

#### Issue

East Boston has an abundance of natural and scenic resources which are endangered. Air pollution is a significant problem. Sewage and other wastes pollute the waters surrounding "the island" and new developments encroach upon wetlands, marshes and scenic areas.

#### Strategies

The City should continue to monitor air and water quality in and around East Boston and work with appropriate agencies to reduce adverse impacts. The BRA's Urban Wilds Study should be continued to identify and assess all natural and scenic resources in East Boston and steps should be taken to use this information to protect these resources. Finally, efforts should be taken to insure that the planned transfer of the Belle Isle Marsh from Massport to the MDC is finalized.



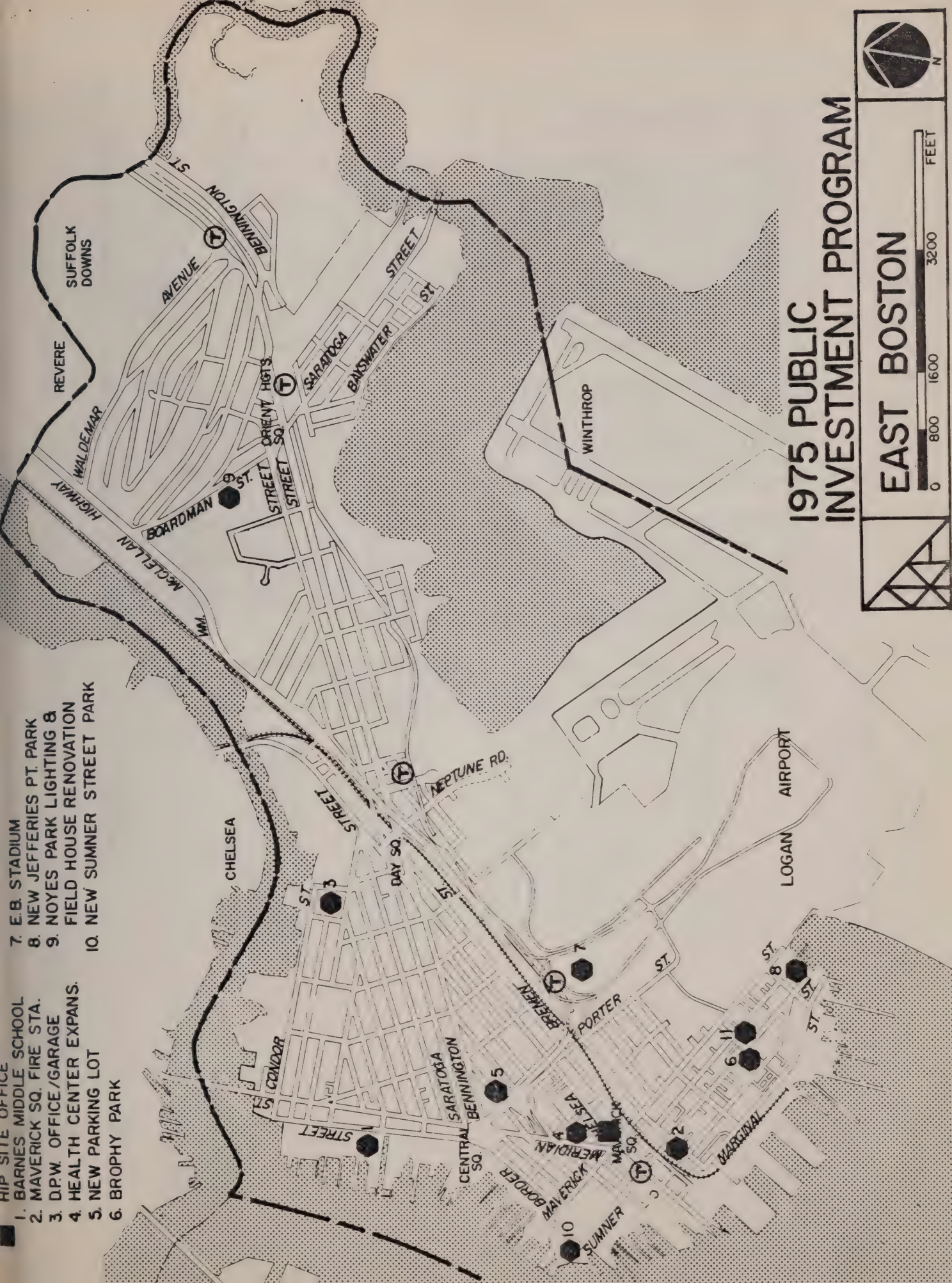
#### E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

During the 1975 fiscal year, public investment program has been concentrated in housing, commercial center and neighborhood capital improvements. Allocated for housing are \$8.9 million for the Sumner Street Elderly Housing Development being readied for occupancy this summer, \$58,000 for the modernization of the Maverick Public Housing Project, \$25,000 for restoration and improvement of vacant lots in residential areas, and \$100,000 for the Mayor's Housing Improvement Program in East Boston. In an effort to revitalize commercial centers, \$20,000 is being spent on improving street lighting in Maverick Square, \$64,000 for traffic signal improvements in Maverick, Central and Day Squares, and \$160,000 for the construction of an off-street parking lot on Porter Street near Central Square. Also \$40,000 has been set aside for consultants to develop recommendations for traffic and parking improvements that can be implemented through the Urban Systems Program in Central and Maverick Squares.

Neighborhood capital improvements have constituted the largest portion of the 1975 investment program. A \$12.8 million new Barnes Middle School is now under construction. Plans are underway for a \$1.4 million fire house to be located near Maverick Square. A new waterfront park in Jeffries Point is being developed at a cost of \$1 million, while \$436,200 has been allocated for acquisition of another waterfront site for a park opposite the Maverick Housing Project. The expansion of the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center is being aided with \$250,000 in City funds. Improvements are being made to various playgrounds and recreational facilities, and a total of \$246,000 is being invested in residential street lighting and a tree planting program.

- 1. BARNES MIDDLE SCHOOL
- 2. MAVERICK SQ. FIRE STA.
- 3. DPW OFFICE/GARAGE
- 4. HEALTH CENTER EXPANS.
- 5. NEW PARKING LOT
- 6. BROPHY PARK

- 7. E.B. STADIUM
- 8. NEW JEFFERIES PT. PARK
- 9. NOYES PARK LIGHTING & FIELD HOUSE RENOVATION
- 10. NEW SUMNER STREET PARK



# 1975 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM

EAST BOSTON





## F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

In order to improve the quality of residential neighborhoods in East Boston a number of investments are needed. The Housing Improvement Program should be available and expanded for the next few years. In an effort to reinforce the investment which owner occupants make in their properties, the city should employ a code enforcement program which is sensitive to the needs of the East Boston community. New Housing Development, especially mixed income projects, is needed as the most appropriate reuse on the Waterfront. Rehabilitation of the Public Housing Project, and construction of a youth center are needed in the Orient Heights neighborhood.

The Commercial Centers in Day Square and Orient Heights, will need both private and public investment if they are to continue as community assets rather than become potential problem areas. The parking problem in all commercial centers demands that off-street lots be made available and amenities such as better lighting, trees, and benches should be provided.

Neighborhood capital improvements have constituted the largest portion of the 1975 investment program; this commitment should continue for the next several years. Emphasis should be placed on the acquisition and development of new and rehabilitated open space and recreational facilities; development of an industrial park and soundproofing and rehabilitation of schools.

In order to reduce disruption in residential neighborhoods, a comprehensive circulation study should be conducted to determine policies and investment needs for transportation improvements.

# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to Issues, Strategies and 1975 Investment Program

<u>Issues</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>1975 Investment Program</u>	<u>Future Investment Needs</u>
1. NEGATIVE INFLUENCES ON QUALITY OF RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS	Preserve & upgrade existing housing stock through a combination of rehabilitation & code enforcement incentives and through selective demolition of unsafe structures.	Mayor's Housing Improvement Program (MHIP) - \$100,000 Maverick Public Housing improvements - \$58,000	MHIP - 100 to 200 units per year Orient Heights Public Housing improvements
	Broaden housing options with new housing construction in a variety of types, sizes & costs.	Sumner Street Elderly Housing Development (NDP I) - \$8,896,585	NDP II mixed income housing development (proposed)
	Improve maintenance of vacant lots by conducting clean-up programs and giving first refusal to abutters on sale of City-owned vacant lots.	Vacant Lots Program - \$25,000	Continued funding for Vacant Lots Program
	Reduce vandalism by providing youth activities programs.		New youth center in Orient Heights Additional youth activities programs.
	Reduce conflicts between residential and other land uses through zoning controls		



# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to Issues, Strategies and 1975 Investment Program

<u>Issues</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>1975 Investment Program</u>	<u>Future Investment Needs</u>
1. NEGATIVE INFLUENCES ON QUALITY OF RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS (cont'd)	Seek location of industrial uses in appropriate areas.		Acquisition of site for industrial park
	Improve existing recreational & open space facilities and acquire & develop additional ones.	<p>Acquisition &amp; development of new Jeffries Point Park - \$100,000</p> <p>Acquisition of new Sumner St. park - \$436,200</p> <p>MDC acquisition of Suffolk Downs Drive-In site</p> <p>Transfer of Bell Isle Marsh to MDC for conservation area</p>	<p>New Orient Heights youth center</p> <p>Development of Sumner St. park</p> <p>Expansion of Constitution Beach facilities (MDC)</p> <p>Golden Stairs Park improvements</p> <p>Acquisition &amp; development of playground at London &amp; Decatur Streets</p>
		<p>Brophy Park improvements - \$15,000</p> <p>Sumner &amp; Lamson St. play area - \$100,000</p> <p>E.B. Stadium improvements - \$60,000</p> <p>Noyes Playground flood-lighting - \$200,000</p> <p>Renovation of Noyes field-house - \$15,000</p>	<p>Central Square park improvements</p> <p>Prescott Square park improvements</p>

# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to Issues, Strategies and 1975 Investment Program

<u>Issues</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>1975 Investment Program</u>	<u>Future Investment Needs</u>
1. NEGATIVE INFLUENCES ON QUALITY OF RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS (cont'd)	Improve private investment confidence by making capital improvements in strategic areas.	<p>Street lighting - \$136,000</p> <p>Tree planting - \$110,000</p> <p>Expansion of Neighborhood Health Center - \$250,000</p> <p>New Barnes Middle School - \$12,800,000</p> <p>New Maverick Sq. fire station - \$1,400,000</p> <p>New Public Works Office/ Garage - \$145,000</p> <p>Street &amp; sidewalk improvements</p> <p>Water &amp; sewer improvements</p> <p>Reconstruction of Curtis St. &amp; Maverick St. bridges</p>	<p>Continuation of tree planting</p> <p>School soundproofing &amp; renovation, e.g. E.B. High, Sherican Jr. High &amp; Kennedy Elementary Schools</p> <p>School replacements. e.g. for Lyman &amp; Alighieri Schools</p> <p>Rehabilitation or replacement of fire station at 360 Saratoga</p> <p>Rehabilitation or relocation of Central Sq. &amp; Orient Heights public libraries</p> <p>Additional street &amp; sidewalk improvements</p> <p>Additional water &amp; sewer improvements</p> <p>Reconstruction of Sumner St. &amp; Porter St. bridges</p>



# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to Issues, Strategies and 1975 Investment Program

<u>Issues</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>1975 Investment Program</u>	<u>Future Investment Needs</u>
2. DECLINE OF NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL CENTERS	Improve business viability through technical assistance to merchants	Commercial Revitalization Program in Central & Maverick Squares	
	Increase shopping convenience through circulation & parking improvements.	<p>Consultant study focusing on street, sidewalk, signal &amp; sign changes to improve pedestrian &amp; auto circulation in Central &amp; Maverick Squares - \$40,000</p> <p>Repair of parking meters &amp; enforcement of on-street parking regulations</p> <p>New parking lot off Porter St. - \$160,000</p> <p>Traffic signal improvements at Maverick, Central &amp; Day Squares - \$63,750</p>	<p>Implementation of consultant recommendations as Federally funded Urban Systems Project</p> <p>Acquisition &amp; development of additional off-street parking in Central &amp; Maverick Squares</p>
	Enhance visual attractiveness of shopping area through storefront rehab & streetscape improvements		<p>Provision of certain amenities as part of Urban Systems Project</p> <p>Storefront rehab incentive program (proposed)</p>

# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to Issues, Strategies and 1975 Investment Program

<u>Issues</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>1975 Investment Program</u>	<u>Future Investment Needs</u>
2. DECLINE OF NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL CENTERS (cont'd)	Reduce crime & vandalism through improved street lighting & police protection	New street lighting in Maverick Square - \$20,000  Foot patrolmen deployed in all four shopping centers	Street lighting improvements in Central Sq., Day Sq., & Orient Heights shopping areas
3. NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS	Reduce negative impact of Logan Airport on community		Soundproofing of schools  Acquisition & development of critical buffer areas, e.g. unused railroad property along Bremen St.
	Oppose conversion of existing seaport facilities at Piers 1-4 to uses that would more seriously impact adjacent residential neighborhoods, e.g. auto storage or container facility.		Site preparation of Piers 1-4
	Reduce disruption caused to residential neighborhoods by tunnels, highway & MBTA line.		Conduct comprehensive circulation plan as recommended by TOPICS



FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to Issues, Strategies and 1975 Investment Program

<u>Issues</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>1975 Investment Program</u>	<u>Future Investment Needs</u>
4. CONTROL OF NEW DEVELOPMENT	Make new development consistent with goal of protecting & enhancing residential neighborhoods		
5. PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES	Reduce air & water pollution; protect wetlands and other natural & scenic resources		Acquisition of fee or easement to critical properties, e.g. Belle Isle Marsh

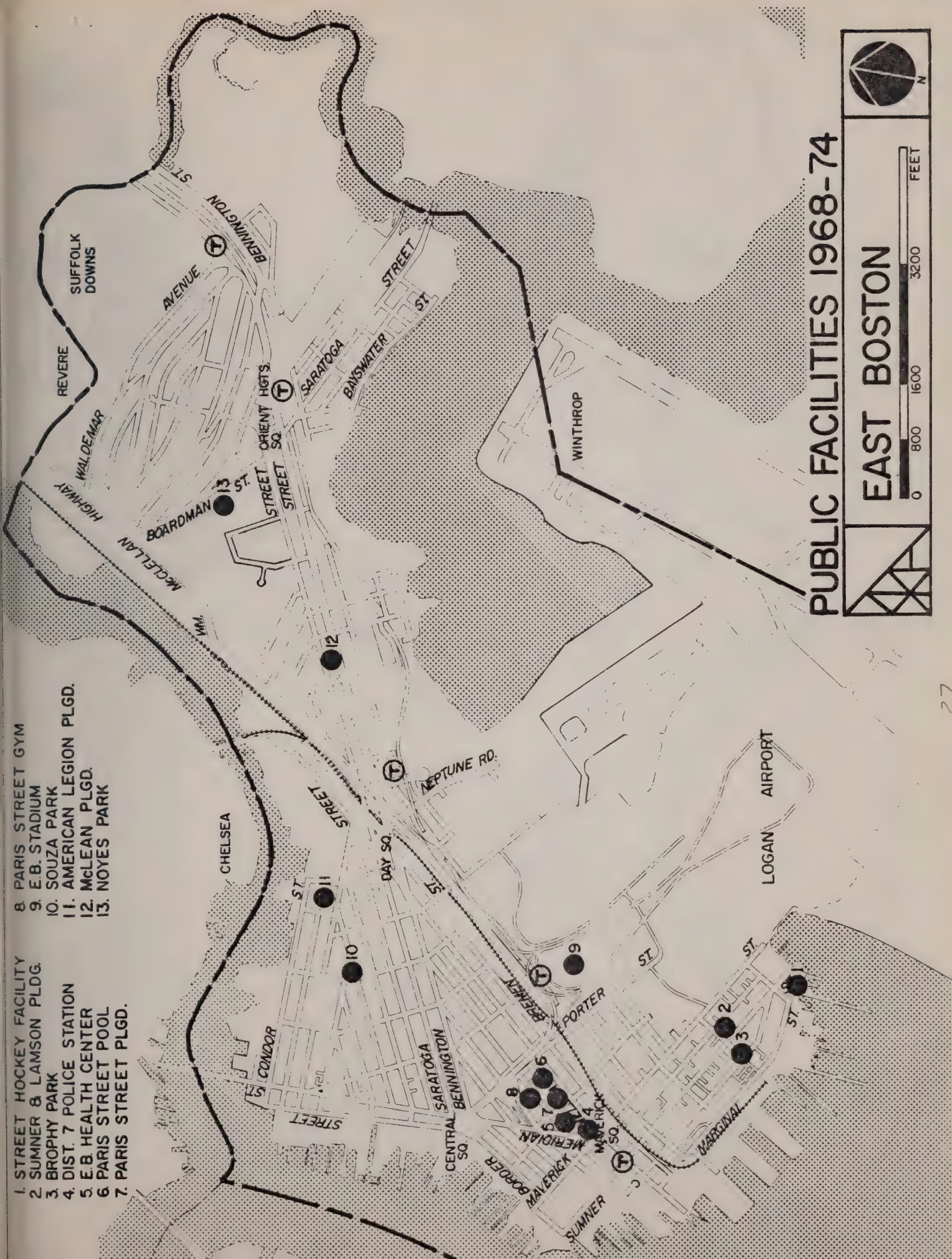
APPENDIX (Maps)





1. STREET HOCKEY FACILITY
2. SUMNER & LAMSON PLDG.
3. BROPHY PARK
4. DIST. 7 POLICE STATION
5. E.B. HEALTH CENTER
6. PARIS STREET POOL
7. PARIS STREET PLGD.

8. PARIS STREET GYM
9. E.B. STADIUM
10. SOUZA PARK
11. AMERICAN LEGION PLGD.
12. McLEAN PLGD.
13. NOYES PARK



PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74

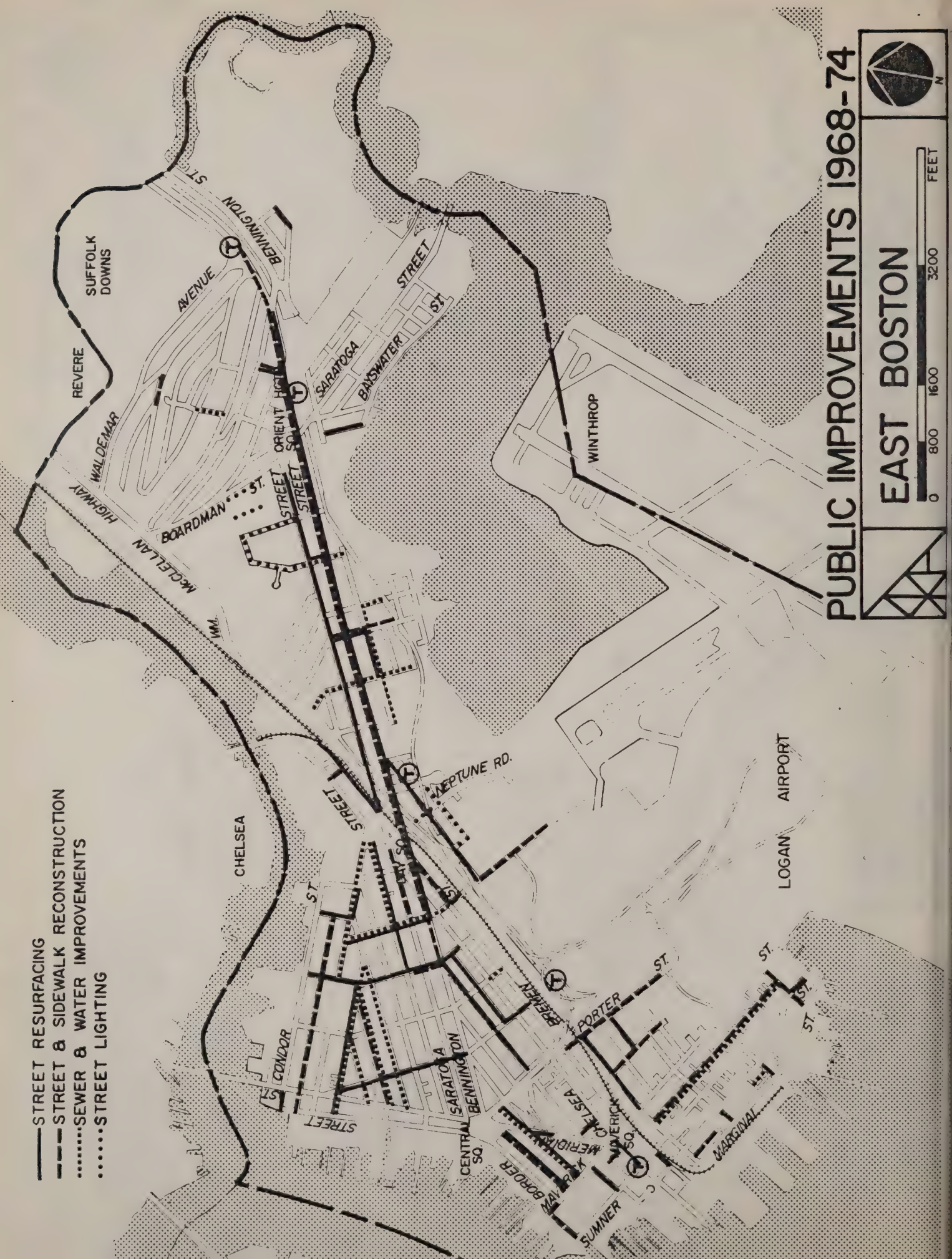
EAST BOSTON

0 800 1600 3200 FEET



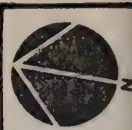


- STREET RESURFACING
- - - STREET & SIDEWALK RECONSTRUCTION
- ..... SEWER & WATER IMPROVEMENTS
- ..... STREET LIGHTING



PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1968-74

EAST BOSTON

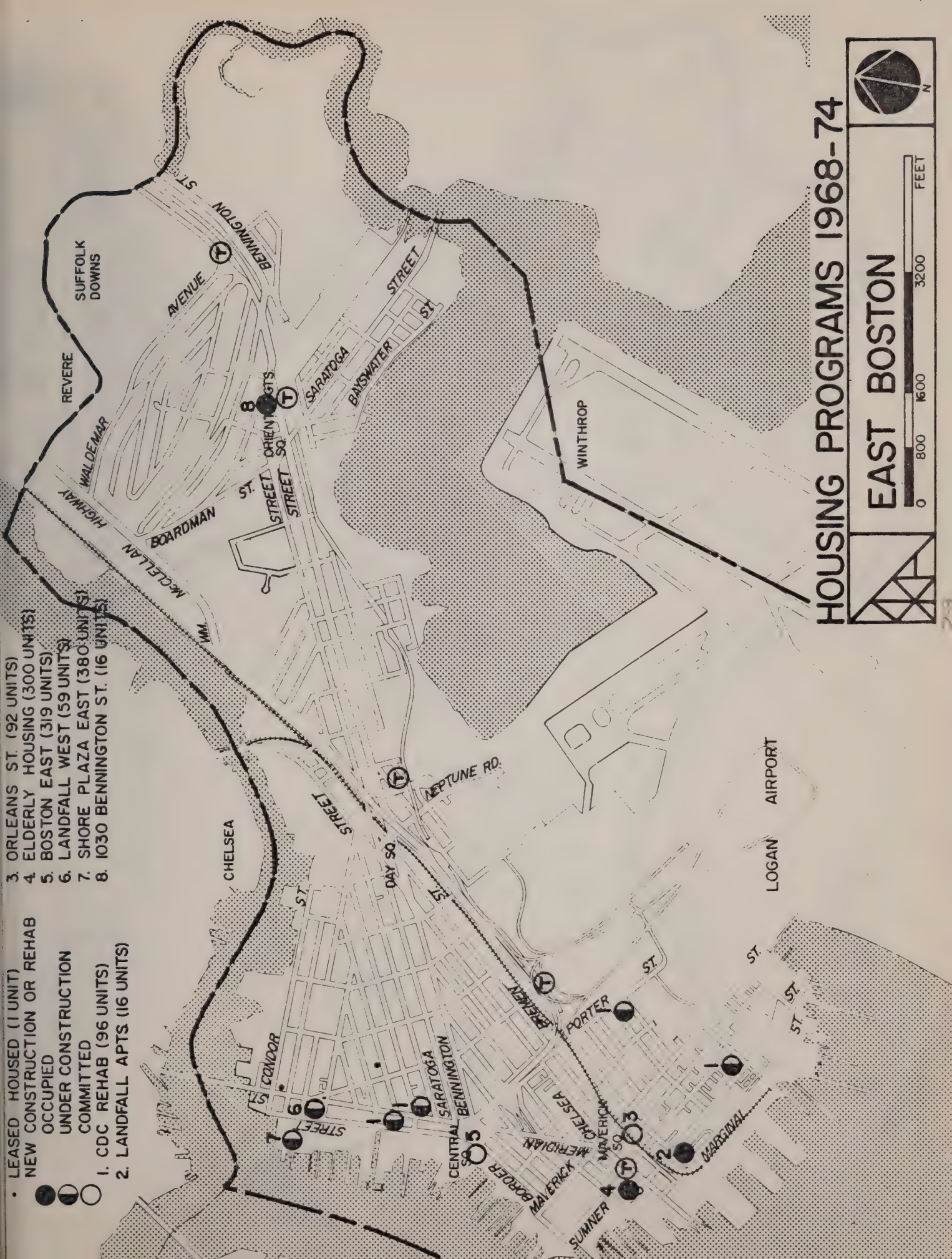


0 800 1600 3200 FEET



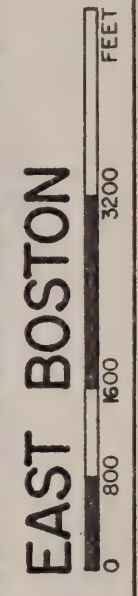
- LEASED HOUSED (1 UNIT)
  - NEW CONSTRUCTION OR REHAB OCCUPIED
  - UNDER CONSTRUCTION
  - COMMITTED
1. CDC REHAB (96 UNITS)
  2. LANDFALL APTS (16 UNITS)

3. ORLEANS ST. (92 UNITS)
4. ELDERLY HOUSING (300 UNITS)
5. BOSTON EAST (319 UNITS)
6. LANDFALL WEST (59 UNITS)
7. SHORE PLAZA EAST (380 UNITS)
8. 1030 BENNINGTON ST. (16 UNITS)



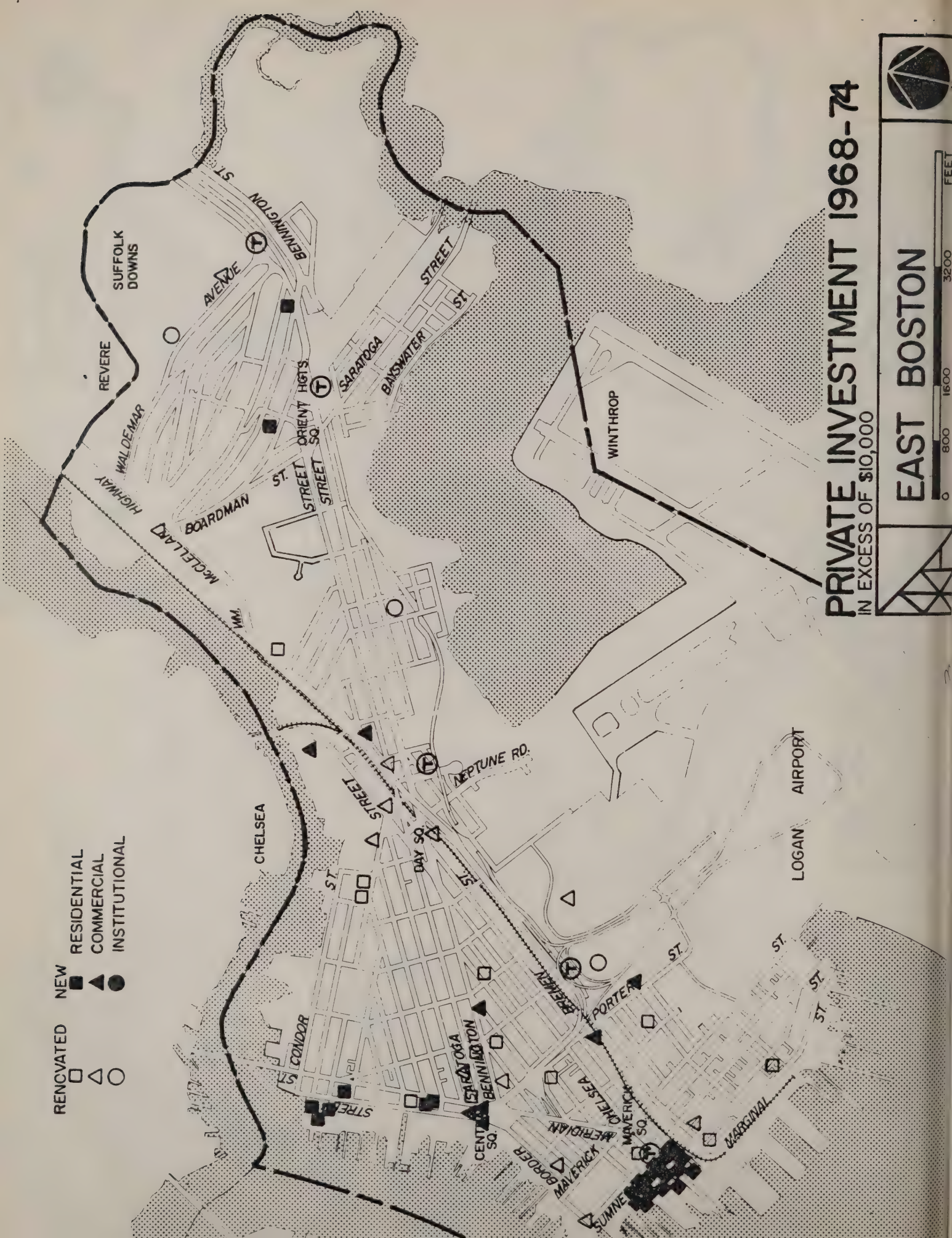
# HOUSING PROGRAMS 1968-74

## EAST BOSTON

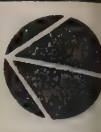




- |           |     |               |   |
|-----------|-----|---------------|---|
| RENOVATED | NEW |               |   |
| □         | ■   | RESIDENTIAL   | ■ |
| △         | ▲   | COMMERCIAL    | ▲ |
| ○         | ●   | INSTITUTIONAL | ● |



**PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1968-74**  
IN EXCESS OF \$10,000



EAST BOSTON

0 800 1600 3200  
FEET







M3/B16  
RA  
75/7  
pt. 5

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS  
DEPARTMENT  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

WORKING DRAFT

COMMUNITY

BMA-0154

## FENWAY-KENMORE DISTRICT

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June, 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.	SHORT HISTORY	171
B.	EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	187
	Fenway-Kenmore District	
	Fenway Subarea	
	Kenmore Subarea	
	West Fens Subarea	197
C.	PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT	198
D.	ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	
	1. Residential Area Uncertainties	
	2. Kenmore Square Transformation	
	3. Open Space Upgrading and Access	
	4. Disposition of Urban Renewal Parcels	
	5. Traffic and Parking	
	6. Upper Boylston Street Reuse	
	7. Institutional Encroachment	
	8. Scarcity of Social Services	
E.	1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	207
F.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS	211
G.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS AS RELATED TO ISSUES, STRATEGIES AND 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	221





## INTRODUCTION

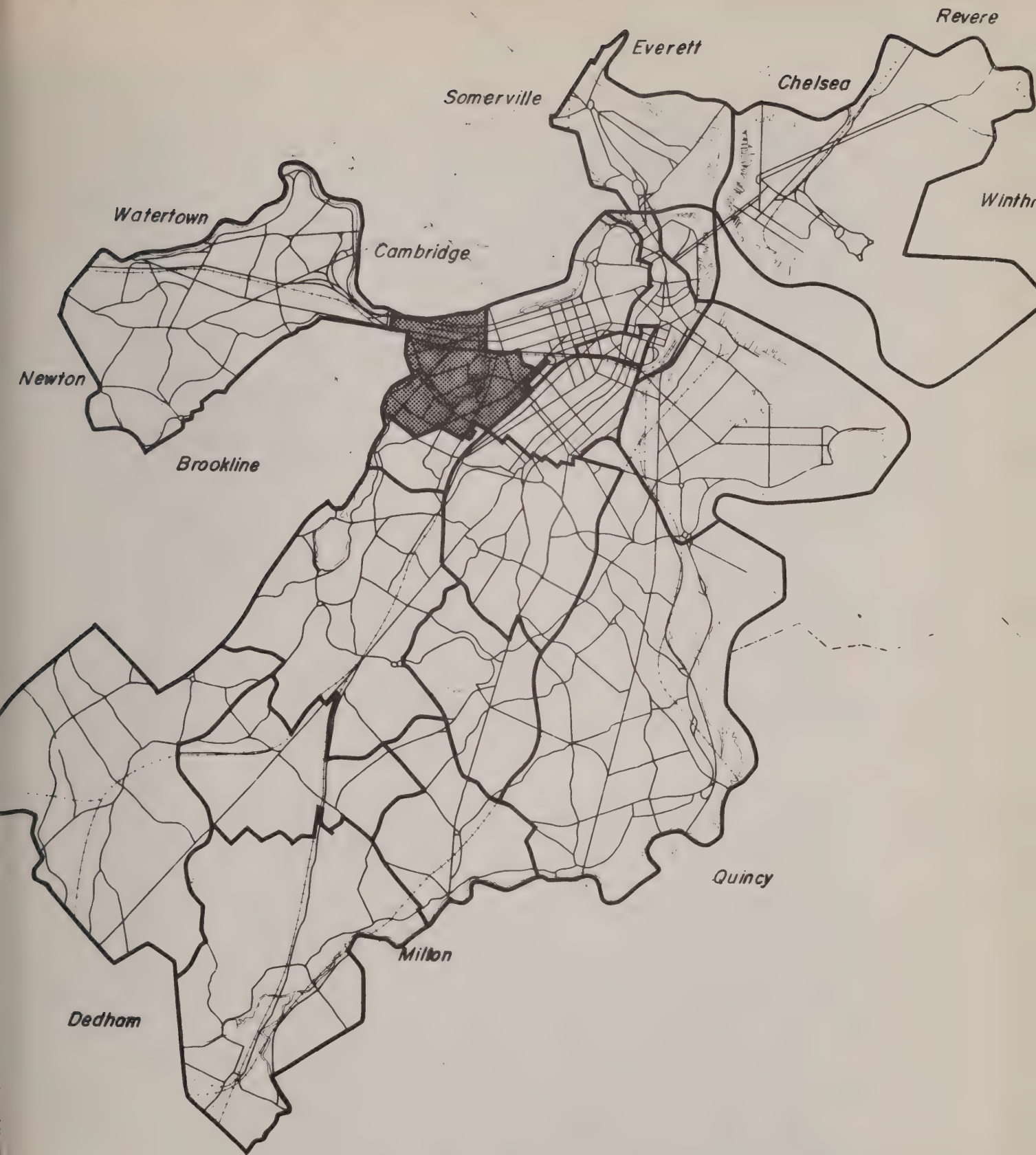
This report, prepared by the Fenway-Kenmore District Planner, is a draft document intended to facilitate discussion among residents and city representatives on planning strategies and investment needs.

The report establishes a base of population, income and housing data and provides information on recent past public and private investment in Fenway-Kenmore. This material can be used by the district planner and others involved in the planning process, including neighborhood residents, Little City Hall staff and other city agencies and departments.

An analysis of the major issues confronting the district is also offered here, together with recommended strategies. These strategies should form the basis for community discussions in the Community Development Block Grant and capital improvement participation process as well as for involvement in issues which are not addressed by city expenditures such as rezoning, private development or wholly funded state programs. The report recognizes that strategies are not self-fulfilling and suggests new investments, both public and private, to help carry through the recommended strategies.







FENWAY-KENMORE







## A. SHORT HISTORY

One century ago, the problems of the Fenway-Kenmore area--then referred to in city annals as "virtually an unusable asset"--prompted the formation of the Boston Park Commission. The group was charged with both developing a park system for the city and solving the drainage difficulties of the Back Bay Fens, a notorious collector of sewage, swamp water and flood run-off of nearby rivers. Not until Frederick Law Olmsted was called on to review the situation three years later were both objectives accomplished in a single scheme. According to his recommendations, tidal gates were constructed, a sewage inceptor was buried in the Fens basin, and fill was placed around the conduit to create a public park. Olmsted's ingenious solution led to renewed residential and commercial development in Boston and to the westward expansion of the city. By 1920, the former mud flats along the Fens were filled completely with land, with the Fens dividing the Kenmore Square portion to the north and west from the Fenway part to the south and east.

Together with the park, two other factors were instrumental in the early development of the area: advances in mass transit and a major downtown fire. Horsecar lines, appearing around 1855, replaced the omnibus, and electric cars further improved service three decades later. Through various linkages, Kenmore Square and lower Huntington Avenue became particularly accessible by public transportation as well as by automobile on newly constructed streets and bridges. Meanwhile, the Boston Fire of 1872 led such institutions as the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Christian Science Church and the Boston Symphony Orchestra to settle near the Fens instead of downtown in the late 1800's.

The Fenway portion of the district continued to attract various institutions--educational, cultural, medical and social--of national and local importance. Nearby, apartment buildings were constructed early this century, joining the brownstone and brick residences of the Symphony and Ruggles neighborhoods. These speculator-built apartment houses varied in quality of construction and, subsequently, in their maintenance. The slow deterioration typical of intown housing and commercial conditions, together with the expansion needs of the Christian Science Church, led to the formation of a renewal plan by the Boston Redevelopment Authority in 1965. Intending to rejuvenate the area through both large-scale reconstruction and improvements to existing neighborhoods and facilities, the Fenway Urban Renewal Project concentrated its initial activities in the vicinity of the Christian Science complex. It eventually erupted into a controversy of certain residents versus planned redevelopment, with a lawsuit in the early 1970's delaying new construction and project improvements, and providing for the formation of the Fenway Project Area Committee (FenPAC), a citizen advisory group.





The portion of the district to the north and west of the Fens experienced another sort of development and decline in the century following Olmsted's improvements to the area. Kenmore Square had existed prior to the redesign of the Fens, as an annex of the downtown characterized by fine hotels, shops and professional offices. Wealthy families moved into townhouses on Bay State Road around the turn of the century, and the Peterborough and Audubon Circle areas were built up with large apartment structures by speculative developers in ensuing decades. Just south of the square, a light industrial and wholesale district flourished. The fibre of these sections has changed greatly in the past 30 years because of the dominance of Boston University and other colleges over the area, the placement of highway and railroad lines and a major sports facility (Fenway Park) and the changes in locational preferences of offices and manufacturing facilities.

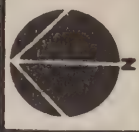
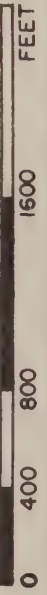






SUB-AREAS

FENWAY / KENMORE







## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

The information in this report on population and housing conditions was derived from the United States Census. Since the boundaries of the Fenway-Kenmore District differ from those of Census tracts, estimation was necessary in calculating some statistics. Due to Census tracts having been redrawn from 1960 to 1970, reliable data comparisons were impracticable on any smaller scale than the full district. Another qualification to be kept in mind in examining the 1970 statistics is that half the district is an urban renewal area. Thus, because of site clearance and planned construction or rehabilitation, both demographic trends and housing conditions are probably affected by more than "normal" market forces, and the relevancy of the now-six-year-old Census data might be less than for other districts.

Three subareas, each with distinguishing characteristics, have been delineated for the purpose of analysis in this report: Fenway, Kenmore and West Fens. Fenway is the portion of the district lying to the south and east of the Fens. Kenmore includes Kenmore Square and the Bay State Road and Audubon Circle residential areas. West Fens refers to the neighborhood just north and west of the Fens.

### FENWAY-KENMORE DISTRICT

The Fenway-Kenmore population is characterized chiefly by its young age, its low incomes and its high transiency. Because the district is the site of so many educational institutions, its population is dominated by persons in the 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 age groups. Since 1960, the percentage of these groups--which now constitute 60% of the district's residents--has doubled, while the proportion of all other age groups has declined. The area's total population of about 33,000 has remained the same, while the city's has decreased by 7% from 1960 to 1970. Median incomes for families and for individuals are below city figures, and 30% of the 3,284 families in Fenway-Kenmore earn less than \$5000 a year, compared with 22% for all Boston. Transiency is another notable characteristic: only 21% of the 1970 population were in their same housing units five years earlier, versus 50% for the city.

Most of the housing stock in the district is brick or stone multi-unit structures, built about a half century ago. By either measure of density--persons per acre or housing units per acre--Fenway-Kenmore is significantly more built-up than the city as a whole. Almost three-fourths of the buildings contain ten units or more, contrasted with one-fourth for the city. The district has the highest percentage of persons living in group quarters (38%, versus Boston's 5%), and even disregarding this dormitory influence, there are nearly twice as many one-person, non-group units in Fenway-Kenmore as citywide. Vacancy rates parallel those of Boston, but a greater proportion (92%) of the housing is in rental units. Owner occupancy is rare: 2% of the total units or 19% of the occupied one-to-nine-unit structures, compared with city figures of 26% and 54%.





## Fenway

The Fenway subarea comprises over half the acreage of the district; its boundaries are the same as those of the Fenway Urban Renewal Project. Land use is dominated by major institutions, particularly Northeastern University, the medical complex and the Christian Science Church. With the growth of area colleges, Fenway has acquired a disproportion (55%) of persons aged 15 to 24. The competition of students and urban renewal activity has squeezed many former older, low-income residents out of the rental housing market, though accommodations for such persons will be replaced in part by future Fenway Urban Renewal Project construction. There are few families in the area. Over a third of the population lives in group quarters, and of the 7191 non-group units, 37% are used by one-person households. The median incomes for families and for individuals--ranging from \$4647 to \$8250 and from \$984 to \$3036, respectively--are the lowest in the district as well as below city figures. Income varies considerably within Fenway, though, with the most severe poverty occurring in the southwest near the Mission Hill public housing project.

Housing in the Fenway subarea is primarily multiple dwelling units in fair condition. Until recently, the Fenway Urban Renewal Plan designated few resources to the improvement of existing residential sections. Thus, with a young and transient population, minimal maintenance and unfulfilled urban renewal expectations (because of the lack of federal rehabilitation funds and other reasons), the condition of the extant housing stock continued to deteriorate despite Fenway's designation as a renewal target. However, with renewal activities and the large financial investment of the Christian Science Church, certain neighborhoods have shown recent improvement (the Seven Streets neighborhood located between Symphony Hall and the Fens, for example), and others now offer new housing (Church Park, etc.).

## Kenmore

The Kenmore subarea, saturated more than any other section of Boston by the student influence, is populated primarily by young people attending Boston University and Graham Junior College, both located there. Persons aged 15 to 24 comprise almost 80% of the population. Only 613 families live in the subarea, and just 4% of the residents are elderly. The median family and median individual incomes are slightly below the city figures, and 26% of the families earn less than \$5000 a year.





Housing in Kenmore is mixed in both quality and kind. In the square, several large residences are former hotels, most of which now serve as dormitories. Along Bay State Road, well-kept brick and brownstone rowhouses create a strip of uniformity and character. Toward the Brookline border in the Audubon Circle section, there are large apartment buildings on main streets and smaller structures elsewhere. Group quartering exists throughout the subarea, providing housing for 56% of the population, in contrast with the city figure of 5% and the district's 38%. Although the density of the Kenmore subarea is twice that of Boston, much of the land use is nonresidential. Educational institutions own considerable property; Fenway Park occupies land near the square; commercial structures and undeveloped lots prevail along Boylston Street and Brookline Avenue.

### West Fens

The demographics of the West Fens area are somewhat more similar to those of the city than are those of the rest of the Fenway-Kenmore District. While the 20 to 24 age group constitutes a high proportion (31%) of the population, 15 to 19 year olds account for only 6% of the total, in contrast to the district figure of 24% and the city figure of 10%. There is less student dominance, with group quarters accommodating only 3% of the residents. The community is chiefly one of young working people--attracted to the area because of the proximity to the Fens, downtown and cultural facilities and its moderate rents--and of elderly residents (19%), many of whom have lived in the neighborhood all their adult lives. There is a higher percentage of families in West Fens than elsewhere in the district; their median income figure is lower than Boston's, and a larger proportion earn less than \$5000 a year. Unrelated individuals nonetheless account for most of the total population, and they have a median income somewhat higher than the city figure.

Housing in this densely developed section has been an issue of citywide notoriety over the past decade. The stock consists almost entirely of large apartment buildings constructed about 50 years ago. One-fourth of the 3276 units have been under single ownership, passing from one absentee landlord to another and deteriorating rapidly in condition in the process. Although efforts are underway by tenants and developers to achieve proper rehabilitation and management of these buildings, the vacancy rate is high, the market is askew and some structures have been unoccupied for over a year. Two major adjacent land uses also have had negative impacts on the livability of the area and on its potential for residential stability: the uncertain fate of the section of Boylston Street from the Fens to Brookline Avenue, and Fenway Park, which contributes traffic, safety and sanitation problems to the neighborhood.





	<u>FENWAY</u>	<u>KENMORE</u>	<u>WEST FENS</u>	<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>CITY</u>
<u>Population</u>					
Total 1970 change from 1960*	18,191	10,315	4,459	32,965 0%	639,803 -7%
Black 1970 % of total change from 1960*	1,499 8%	349 3%	165 4%	2,013 6% 0%	104,429 16% +65%
Aged 15-19 % of total change from 1960*	4,448 24%	3,697 36%	249 6%	8,394 25% +103%	60,900 10% +22%
Aged 20-24 % of total change from 1960*	5,517 30%	4,480 43%	1,399 31%	11,396 35% +108%	76,958 12% +47%
Aged 65+ % of total change from 1960*	2,995 16%	369 4%	850 19%	3,346 11% -19%	81,437 13% -4%
Families	1,988	613	683	3,284	142,019
<u>Income</u>					
Median family	\$4,647- \$8,250	\$7,283- \$9,565	\$7,283	\$7,283	\$9,133
Median individual	\$984- \$3,036	\$1,065- \$3,427	\$3,427	\$2,126	\$2,819
% Families under \$5000	31%	26%	30%	30%	22%
<u>Housing</u>					
Total units	7,191	2,776	3,276	13,243	232,400
Owner-occupied units	155 2%	106 4%	9 0%	260 2%	59,178 26%
Renter-occupied units	6,545 91%	2,496 90%	3,167 97%	12,208 92%	158,257 68%
Vacant units	491 7%	174 6%	100 3%	775 6%	14,966 6%
% 1-9-unit owner-occupied structures	25%	14%	0%	19%	54%
Housing units/acre	13	14	30	15	7
Persons/acre	33	43	41	36	20
10+ units per structure	4,925 68%	1,696 61%	2,770 85%	9,341 71%	54,573 23%
Persons in group quarters	6,775 37%	5,759 56%	122 3%	12,656 38%	28,658 5%
Non-group units with 1 person	3,712 52%	1,417 51%	1,981 60%	7,110 54%	69,939 30%
Persons in same unit, 5+ years*	4,714 26%	825 8%	1,338 30%	6,921 21%	294,797 50%
Units needing \$1000+ fix-up* <sup>Δ</sup>				4,479 34%	67,102 29%
Market condition <sup>Δ</sup>	Stable	Stable	Uncertain	Stable	Stable

<sup>Δ</sup> Data source is BRA Research Department

\* Reliable data available only for city and district





### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Public improvements in the Fenway-Kenmore District from 1968 through 1974 consisted chiefly of lighting, street and sidewalk repair, and sewer and water line work. They were concentrated in the Fenway subarea through the Fenway Urban Renewal Project, which expended \$1,713,303 on such items. Included in that figure was \$34,200 for a new tot lot and the mothers rest in the Fens. Urban renewal funds also were invested in property acquisition (\$4,239,437) and in site clearance (\$171,631) during the same period. In addition, the city made major expenditures for two citywide facilities located in the district: English High School (\$22,744,750) and the Boston Fire Department's central alarm control station (\$27,000) situated on the edge of the Fens. The city also upgraded the Back Bay Fire Station (\$402,400) and Back Bay Police Substation (\$56,200), both located on Boylston Street in the northeast corner of the Fenway-Kenmore District. The Parks and Recreation Department made improvements to the Fens, including \$93,000 for new lights, water lines and walkways and \$120,000 for the baseball diamond, basketball court, bleachers, lighting and landscaping in the Clemente Park portion of the Fens. They also expended \$9500 for new street trees in Kenmore Square.

Public effort in housing has been in the form of new construction, rehabilitation and leased housing. The Church Park apartments in the Christian Science complex have provided 508 units, including 127 subsidized for low-income persons and 50 for moderate-income individuals. Also in the renewal project, Morville House has provided 74 low-income and 73 moderate-income units for the elderly. Through rehabilitation, the nearby Burbank Gardens contain 13 low-income and 15 moderate-income apartments in its total of 52. Also rehabilitated were Norway Housing, providing 75 low-income units and 27 moderate rentals among its 136 units, and the Burbank Apartments, where 34 of the 173 units are subsidized. Individual units of leased housing also are scattered in residential buildings throughout the district.

### PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

A review of building permits issued for construction activity in excess of \$10,000 from 1970 to 1974 indicates institutional, residential and commercial investment in Fenway-Kenmore. Most of the activity has been in rehabilitation and expansion of existing structures rather than new construction, and it has been located primarily in the Fenway subarea of the district.

Neither residential nor commercial dollar investment was extensive, according to permits issued. Several institutions made substantial expenditures, with permits issued for construction in excess of \$1-million to New England Deaconess (School of Nursing at 1 Autumn Street and laboratory-therapy center at 198 Pilgrim Road), Simmons College (academic building at 300 Fenway), Beth Israel (hospital rehabilitation) and Northeastern University (classroom building rehabilitation at 330 Huntington Avenue).







RENOVATED NEW

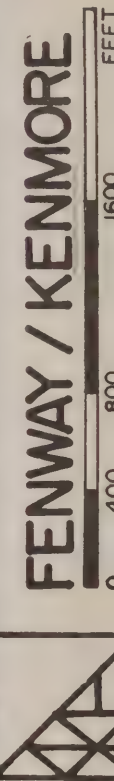
○ △ ◇ □ ×

● ▲ ◆ ■

RESIDENTIAL  
COMMERCIAL  
MEDICAL  
EDUCATIONAL  
OTHER INST.

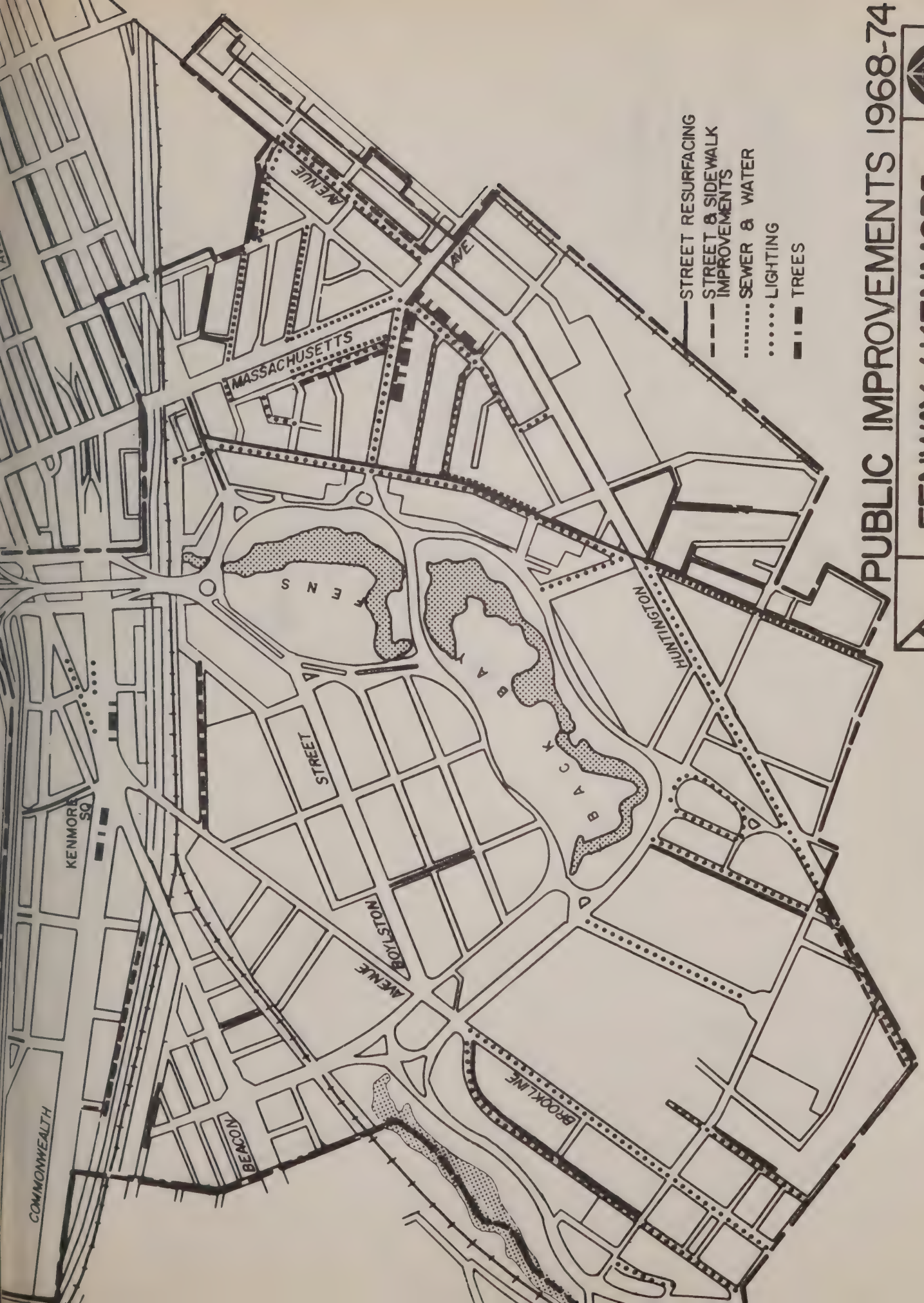
PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1970-74  
IN EXCESS OF \$10,000

FENWAY / KENMORE









- STREET RESURFACING
- - - STREET & SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS
- ..... SEWER & WATER
- ..... LIGHTING
- ■ ■ TREES

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1968-74

FENWAY / KENMORE





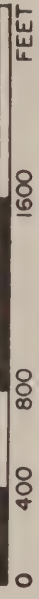




- 1. ENGLISH HIGH SCHOOL
- 2. FIRE ALARM CENTER
- 3. CLEMENTE PARK
- 4. FENWAY WALKWAYS, UTILITIES
- 5. BACK BAY FIRE STATION
- 6. BACK BAY POLICE SUB-STATION

# PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74

## FENWAY / KENMORE









# PROPERTY ACQUISITION BY BRA 1968-74

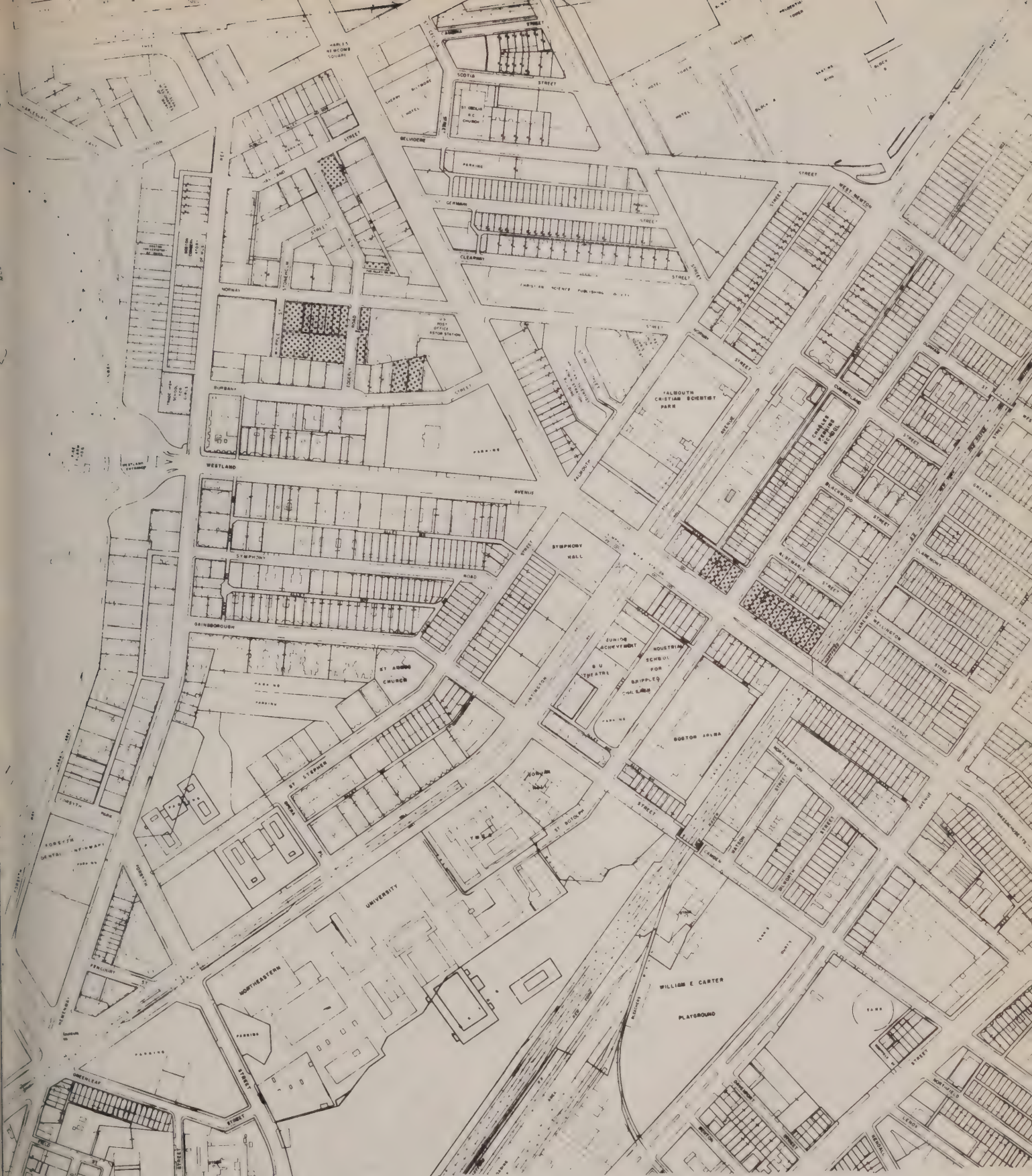


FENWAY - KENMORE

0 400 800 1600 FEET



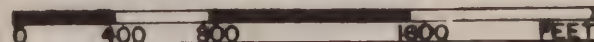




**SITE CLEARANCE BY BRA 1968-74**



**FENWAY - KENMORE**





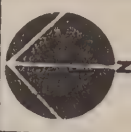




- LEASED HOUSING (1-4 UNITS)
- COMPLETED MIXED-INCOME HOUSING PROJECTS
- △ FUTURE MIXED-INCOME HOUSING PROJECT (SEE FOLLOWING PAGE)

# HOUSING PROGRAMS 1968-74

FENWAY / KENMORE







SUBSIDIZED HOUSING PROGRAMS  
1968-1974

<u>Development and Address</u>	<u>Apartments and Rent Levels*</u>
1) Church Park 221 Massachusetts Avenue	Total: 508 Low: 127 Moderate: 50
2) Morville House 106 Norway Street	Total: 147 (elderly) Low: 74 Moderate: 73
3) Burbank Gardens 31-41 Burbank Street	Total: 52 Low: 13 Moderate: 15
4) Norway Housing 99-103 Norway Street	Total: 136 Low: 75 Moderate: 27
5) Burbank Apartments Edgerly Road	Total: 173 Low: 34

FUTURE SUBSIDIZED HOUSING PROGRAMS  
1975-1977

6) Symphony Plaza East Massachusetts Avenue at Huntington Avenue (Parcel 15)	Total: 173 (elderly) Low: 43 Moderate: 130
7) Symphony Plaza West Massachusetts Avenue at Huntington Avenue (Parcel 9)	Total: 201 Low: 50 Moderate: 151
8) Parcel 3 (new construction) 150-186 Huntington Avenue	Total: ca. 320 Low: ca. 80
9) Parcel 7 (rehabilitation) 351-369 Massachusetts Avenue	Total: ca. 45 Low: ca. 11 Moderate: ca. 34

\* Income levels according to federal definitions





## D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

Eight major issues facing the Fenway-Kenmore district are described briefly in this section. The problems often are interrelated and their solutions complex, involving both public and private initiative. Despite the challenge, however, this area offers an enormous potential--because of its location, existing amenities and generally solid though deteriorating housing stock--to become a more viable urban community and a major asset to the city.

### 1. RESIDENTIAL AREA UNCERTAINTIES

#### Issue

Due to a variety of factors--including the half-century age of structures, poor maintenance, critical shifts in population and wealth--much of the district's housing stock has deteriorated since World War II.

The lack of preservation and rehabilitation action has become a complicated matter. Tenants often live in substandard conditions which they want improved, but they cannot afford higher rents. Property owners, meanwhile, complain that rent control and the prospect of increased tax assessments keep them from upgrading housing. Residential surroundings, including environmental conditions and local retail/service sections, have witnessed a corresponding decline.

The precise nature of the problem varies within the district. In the Seven Streets neighborhood, for instance, where there is some owner-occupancy and an active civic group, the difficulties have centered on environmental and social problems (unsound building conditions, fire, illegal occupancy, prostitution, drugs), the dominance of Northeastern University and its students over the area, and the lack of expected 312 Loans to assist in rehabilitation. Audubon Circle has been impacted by a similar student takeover because of its proximity to Boston University, with the result that building conversions have occurred enabling the neighborhood to become more transient (family homes to lodging houses, large apartments to dormitories). In the West Fens area, a large and important stock of apartment buildings currently requires substantial renovation. Because of the conflicts with the owners of some 800 of those units and the local tenant organization, the housing market there is uncertain and an inordinant vacancy rate has been induced. Neighborhood shops have responded with vacancies and deterioration.

If the livability of these sections is not preserved, a major source of city housing will be lost. Furthermore, pressures to provide homes for low- and moderate-income working people, elderly and students will increase on other areas of Boston, such as the North End, Back Bay and Allston-Brighton, where the demand could not be so readily accommodated.





## Strategy

The problems of residential conditions in Fenway-Kenmore relate not only to low incomes, but also to the dominance over the area by a young, mobile population. While there is a need to restore some balance to the age and income mix--to help stabilize the area and create a sense of community and continuity--any strategy must recognize that the district's improvement cannot rest solely on the traditional neighborhood-upgrading approaches of increased owner-occupancy, rising socio-economic levels and more families. The district, because of its extant housing stock and its proximity to educational institutions, will continue in the foreseeable future to be a rental community with a youth orientation. As such, it is nonetheless a major city resource, and one that now demands public effort to halt the trend toward deterioration.

The city can help through public policy and through an infusion of public funds. Sensitive code enforcement (building, zoning, housing, licensing, police, sanitary) is one essential element in all the residential areas. Also, Boston's rent control and assessment policies should be reviewed to assure they are applied so as to encourage rehabilitation.

In the Seven Streets, Bay State Road and Audubon Circle neighborhoods, the city's Housing Improvement Program can serve to encourage rehabilitation, owner occupancy and positive conversions. In the West Fens section, the effort must include increased city and resident participation to see that rehabilitation takes place and that the improvements justify any rent increases; quality renovation there, together perhaps with varied rents and new ownership/management forms, could not only preserve the housing stock but also set standards for the rest of the district.

Particularly in West Fens, leased housing or other rental assistance should be sought to meet the needs of the elderly and long-term families which qualify. Audubon and Kenmore also present potential elderly housing sites in buildings currently owned by schools. Another district housing need that could be better met is one-room units without cooking facilities; the Audubon area might be an appropriate place to study this need and establish a model lodging house experiment.

In addition to innovative housing solutions, public improvements--including open space, lighting, street trees, parking, pedestrian and traffic circulation, social service facilities, streets and sidewalks--should be programmed for the West Fens and Audubon neighborhoods and continued in the Seven Streets area.





## 2. Kenmore Square Transformation

### Issue

Changes in land use and population throughout the district are reflected in the recent character of its commercial areas. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Kenmore Square, which has emerged as a youth-oriented retail and entertainment center. The square has ceased to have a reputation for prime office space, hotels and stores; even its distinction as a key transportation exchange has diminished with auto congestion and inefficient Green Line MBTA service. Kenmore Square's most notable physical characteristic, its large hotels, have been converted in some instances to dormitories by Boston University and Graham Junior College. The underutilization, poor maintenance and future uncertainty of the Graham buildings have had an additional negative impact on the area; if these properties go on the market, their reuse will be of major significance to the area.

Nonresidential properties pose another problem. In upper stories of commercial structures, office space is experiencing high vacancy rates. On the lower levels, while long-term vacancies are not an issue, the mix of uses is, since it contributes to the Kenmore subarea's lack of stability, diversification and aesthetic appeal. The range and quality of goods and services are geared almost exclusively to the tastes and incomes of the college-aged population. Fast-food establishments dominate the limited array; their signage and litter generation create much of the square's atmosphere. The baseball games at nearby Fenway Park have other blighting effects, in the forms of traffic and parking problems, crowds and litter.

In addition, the Commonwealth Avenue Mall is in poor condition, with the state air quality monitoring trailer adding to its disrepair near Deerfield Street. The MBTA Busway has divided the square visually and has made pedestrian crossing more chaotic. Traffic continues to be a problem, parking violators are not towed, sign code illegalities abound, and trash receptacles are inadequate to meet the area's needs.

### Strategy

A comprehensive, visible program of rehabilitation is required to reestablish a sense of balance and character to this important and well-located commercial center. Both public and private investment and determination are necessary. Basic to the improvement of Kenmore Square is the preparation of a comprehensive study and plan for the area geared toward introducing a more permanent, balanced population.





The city, for its part, has a variety of tools to upgrade the area. First, a staged program of environmental improvements should be developed, involving the rehabilitation of the mall, street trees, curbing, sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, traffic flow, waste baskets, bicycle racks, benches, signage and lighting. These expenditures should be directed at improving the appearance--and thus the livability and economic viability--of Kenmore Square and at recreating a sense of character for the area. Enforcement of existing ordinances (zoning, parking, sign, sanitation) is another necessary step in upgrading the square. The city also should insist on the relocation by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts of its pollution monitoring trailer, which has occupied a portion of the mall without a lease for several years.

In the private domain, property owners and abutters must organize into a permanent, active, effective group. They need to decide on what image the square should have, through realistically and thoroughly assessing the problems and potentials. The merchants, in particular, should formulate a strategy to include: (1) specifying needed public improvements, (2) emphasizing solidarity and the area's assets through promotional efforts, setting similar store hours and advertising together as a group, (3) pressuring retailers and restaurateurs to improve their facades, signs and maintenance and the goods and services they offer, (4) seeking to attract new enterprise and a broader range of uses, such as quality specialty boutiques or condominiums or professional offices, to generate more and higher-grade business. In addition to these actions, there may be major reuse or development opportunities there that could blend with upgrading and increasing residential and commercial uses in Kenmore Square. A real estate market analysis could help determine the feasibility of such redevelopment.

### 3. OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENT AND ACCESS

#### Issue

Fenway-Kenmore is rich in open space, notably the Olmsted legacies of the Back Bay Fens and the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, which together account for about 15% of the district's acreage. Both facilities, however, have deteriorated physically and have become increasingly inaccessible because of automobile traffic and parking. In the case of the Fens, a further hazard is now the park's use and reputation as a place of criminal activity. The condition of these substantial open spaces has rendered them of minimal use to the immediate community and to the city as a whole.





## Strategy

Most of the open space needs of the district could be met through existing facilities if major efforts were exerted in replanning, capital investment, repair and the coordination of city and regional agencies. The Fens will receive about \$1-million in city and Metropolitan District Commission improvements in 1975, but this is only a start to upgrading the park. The Fens must be reexamined and a plan for its future devised. Among the issues to be addressed there are: what landscaping and facilities should be preserved, improved, redesigned or eliminated; what new elements should be provided; what traffic and parking changes should be implemented to reduce the automobile impact on the park and assure safe and convenient pedestrian access; what measures would improve security; what nearby institutions should do to contribute to the upgrading of the park. Memorial Circle, across from the Fens at Westland Avenue, is an important aesthetic element which should be included in the effort.

The section of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall located in the district is also in need public investment to restore its appearance and usefulness as open space. From Charlesgate West to Kenmore Street, the mall requires landscaping--including trees, bushes, grass, fencing, lights, hard surface, curbing, benches and trash receptacles. From Deerfield Street to the MBTA tunnel, the mall could be restored with minimal investment through simple planting and circulation paths following the removal of the state's pollution monitoring trailer.

Finally, in addition to upgrading and assuring safe access to these two major open space resources, the city should investigate the need for special facilities, particularly for children and the elderly, within residential sections. It should continue to work with Boston University and the Christian Science Church in planning and implementing park contributions and encourage other area institutions to make similar improvements. The city and community also ought to seek neighborhood access to institutionally owned parks, such as that of the Harvard School of Public Health in the West Fens area. Finally, planning should begin for a system of pedestrian walkways and bikeways throughout the district, including better linkage to the Esplanade along the Charles River.

## 4. DISPOSITION OF URBAN RENEWAL PARCELS

### Issue

The Fenway Urban Renewal Plan, because of its initial emphasis on demolition and redevelopment to achieve a new image, became a heated controversy in the early 1970's. A citizen lawsuit delayed renewal activity until the formation of FenPAC, a





community group with advisory powers to the Boston Redevelopment Authority. With increased sensitivity to the wishes of present residents and with a diminished potential for federal renewal monies, the project now is concentrating on improvements to current residential and commercial areas as well as on the redevelopment or rehabilitation of key remaining disposition parcels. Community consensus, however, is unresolved regarding the fate of some parcels and the dispersal of public funds for improvements elsewhere in the project boundaries.

### Strategy

The city, through its renewal agency and other departments, will continue to discuss with FenPAC the various issues relating to the redevelopment or renovation of all renewal parcels. To reach the best decisions regarding the disposition of controversial parcels along Massachusetts Avenue, FenPAC and the BRA must take care to broaden its base of citizen participation so that the objectives of all residents in the area can be considered before planning decisions and major capital expenditures are made.

## 5. TRAFFIC AND PARKING

### Issue

The heavy traffic volumes and circulation and parking problems in Fenway-Kenmore affect not only drivers and pedestrians but also the district's air quality, noise levels and open space facilities. The situation is most obvious at morning and evening commuter peak periods and when Red Sox games are being played at Fenway Park. Local streets as well as major roadways sometimes become impassable, and on game days virtually all available space--including the Back Bay Fens and the Commonwealth Avenue Mall--is converted to parking use, legal or not. Even without the impact of Fenway Park, more cars than desirable park on interior streets in the Peterborough and Fenway subareas. Congestion and pedestrian hazards occur regularly in Kenmore Square and on major arterials (Massachusetts, Huntington and Brookline Avenues), where medical and educational institutions contribute to traffic and parking demands.

The roadway immediately surrounding the Fens--Park Drive, the Fenway and Agassiz Road--presents special problems. It has become a carrier of heavy, fast-moving, constant through traffic. As a result, pedestrian access to the park has become difficult and dangerous. In some cases, walk lights simply do not exist; in other locations, they have been left unactivated or are poorly synchronized for safe crossing or are flouted by drivers.





In Kenmore Square, the inherent difficulties of pedestrians and motorists sharing a complicated traffic interchange have been exacerbated by the MBTA's ground-level location of its bus terminal and by the inability of the underpass to attract pedestrian crossings. The square has one of the highest intersectional accident totals in Massachusetts; because of the amount of traffic passing through and nearby on the Massachusetts Turnpike and Storrow Drive, it also has noise and air pollution problems among the worst in the state.

### Strategy

Additional expenditures and coordination among concerned public agencies are needed for further traffic and parking improvements in the district. An attempt to implement such coordination was begun this year by the BRA through a comprehensive circulation, pedestrian access and land use study of the area surrounding the Fens, with FenPAC and MDC officials. More mutual assistance and planning are needed in the future and should include the MBTA so that public transit is properly assessed as part of the solution to traffic and parking problems.

The completion of the initial phases of the TOPICS program, designed to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety on Massachusetts, Commonwealth and Huntington Avenues, will help alleviate some problems. It is anticipated that the traffic control portion of the Massachusetts Avenue project will be completed this summer, that pedestrian, traffic and aesthetic improvements on Commonwealth Avenue from B.U. Bridge to Kenmore Square will be finished by 1976, and that construction on Huntington Avenue will begin in late 1976.

The extensive improvements for Kenmore Square proposed by the BRA last year have not proceeded further because of funding restrictions. Among the key elements that need to be considered in improving traffic and pedestrian conditions in the square are circulation pattern changes, relocation of the taxi stand, enforcement of parking regulations and turning movements, new neckdowns, the reduction or removal of bus traffic at street level, improved signage and pedestrian walkways. Further exploration of the feasibility of building a parking garage for the area--perhaps as a joint effort by the Red Sox, Boston University and other major users--would not only improve conditions during the baseball season but also would provide parking for commercial and professional uses in and near the square. In the interim, the creation of shuttle bus service to available parking areas (such as the Southwest Corridor clearing) or the restriction of existing parking lots to buses to discourage patrons from driving to games should be considered. The city and MDC also must intensify their ticketing



and towing efforts to make the Red Sox and their customers more aware of the safety hazards and inconvenience they impose. Finally, the development of a resident sticker program would help address this and other area parking problems, including those created by Northeastern, B.U. and the medical complex, and double-parked cars in commercial areas and on arterials.

In the case of the area immediately surrounding the Fens, coordination is needed in the review and implementation of further traffic direction and capacity changes to assure a reduction of the impact of automobiles on the park. Parking policies also need to be clarified and then enforced. Proposals devised by the community, city and MDC--some of which already exist--must be assessed as soon as possible so that 1975 and 1976 MDC funding for the area can be coordinated with city (and any applicable state and federal) expenditures and community objectives.

#### 6. UPPER BOYLSTON STREET REUSE

##### Issue

The three-block portion of Boylston Street from the Fens to Brookline Avenue is an underutilized, auto-oriented commercial strip. Much of the land is occupied by one-story structures that are often vacant and by parking lots used to capacity only during the baseball season. Private reconstruction has taken place in a haphazard fashion, not serving to improve the street's appearance or to stabilize its economy. At night, the strip is deserted and dark; it has become a dangerous area.

Boylston Street's need for planned reuse is clear, but the precise nature of its rejuvenation has never been pursued to the point of an active, investor-backed proposal. One concept discussed by the BRA has involved the construction of new mixed-use structures (residential, with ground-floor retail) of 12 to 15 stories. A more recent tentative proposal, advanced by a group of Boylston Street property owners organized as the Fenway Boylston Improvement Association, emphasizes the redevelopment and rehabilitation of the area for medical ancillary purposes--technical supplies, sales offices, repair centers, and so on--in combination with residences.

Zoning changes for height and density would likely be necessary for any major, intensive redevelopment of Boylston Street. Thus the reuse becomes a matter of public policy. It is also a matter of concern to the adjacent West Fens neighborhood, whose population composition, economy, environment and general character stand to be affected by changes on Boylston Street.





## Strategy

A rehabilitated upper Boylston Street, including new construction and new uses, would utilize more fully a section of prime real estate which has undergone little improvement. The residential component of such redevelopment would be critical. It must be viewed as an opportunity to reinforce the residential character of the West Fens area by providing some low- and moderate-income housing for small households, the elderly and young working people; at the same time, it might offer a way to diversify and stabilize the area by creating housing for larger families and higher-income people as well. Given the amount of potential redevelopment and the difficulties to date in preserving the West Fens neighborhood, both the city and the existing residential community must be brought into the planning process with property owners to help determine the scale and nature of Boylston Street's reuse. The BRA should prepare development guidelines, and no further zoning variances or alcoholic beverage/entertainment licenses should be approved unless they occur as part of a master redevelopment scheme to be worked out for the street.

## 7. INSTITUTIONAL ENCROACHMENT

### Issue

Fenway-Kenmore contains one of the largest concentrations of educational institutions, hospitals, research facilities and museums in the country. While these are in many ways assets to the city, they also have serious negative impacts, particularly on nearby residential sections. The inherent conflicts between institutional and neighborhood uses have been exacerbated by rapid, uncontrolled expansion of the medical complex, Northeastern University, Boston University and others over the past two decades. The resultant problems include excessive demands on city services, roadway and parking capacities; changes in the size and character of the housing stock; residential blight from the impacts of illegal quartering, building conversions, noise, poor maintenance and transiency; the nontaxability of property; incompatible land uses; obsolete or underutilized buildings and facilities.

### Strategy

Policy guidance and coordination can encourage more orderly growth or consolidation of medical and educational facilities and can minimize the undesirable effects of their presence.

Further medical area development should conform to the Mayor's policy statement of September 1970 to "assure that such development is in the best interests of both the immediate neighborhood and the city." In particular, close city and community coordination and review are necessary regarding proposals which





could affect the housing supply, the relocation of tenants, traffic, parking and municipal service capacities. In the immediate future, this includes the new Affiliated Hospitals Center, the proposed MASCO total energy plant and reuse of the present power facility, the possible extension of the Deaconess parking garage and construction of the Mission Park Housing Project on the nearby Convent site. The city has legal review over land use, density of development and design through the BRA and the Zoning Board of Appeals; in addition, BRA approval is necessary in projects developed through Chapter 121A of the Massachusetts General Laws. These review powers must be exercised--and citizen input sought from FenPAC, Roxbury Tenants of Harvard (RTH) and others--to optimize the benefits to the city and neighborhoods from any future changes in the medical area. As part of the review and planning process, the city should continue to work closely with MASCO, the Medical Area Service Corporation which now represents and coordinates the needs of the area's major hospitals, and its consultants on matters of access, parking and service.

The district's educational facilities--which include Boston State, Massachusetts College of Art, Wheelock, Simmons, Emmanuel, Graham, Wentworth, Harvard Medical and Harvard Public Health in addition to the two major institutions, Northeastern and Boston Universities--pose problems similar to those in the medical area. Their student populations also place burdens on the housing market. The decades of expansion, however, for the academic, residential, administrative and social needs of these schools are probably over: enrollments are stabilizing and in some instances declining, and several educational institutions are rumored to be closing. The city should require that any future land use changes or building conversions by educational institutions be accompanied by a master plan agreed on by the school and the city prior to the approval of zoning variances and licensing requests. Generally, these institutions should not encroach into residential areas; should provide for a reasonable proportion of the housing, parking and transportation needs of their students; should make payments to the city sufficient to support the municipal services they require; should provide and promote programs and facilities to adjacent residential communities; should improve the appearance of their physical plants and make open space amenities available to the public. Finally, if any of the schools move or close, the city must take initiative in seeing that the released land and buildings are reused so as to improve the residential quality and stability of the district.



## 8. SCARCITY OF SOCIAL SERVICES

### Issue

Because of the composition of the Fenway-Kenmore population, there is a need for a variety of social services. The area is home to an unusually high proportion of people who live alone and without nearby family ties, and who because of these and other factors (age, poor nutrition, psychological alienation, declining employment opportunities, inadequate living conditions) require a wide range of accessible, inexpensive services.

The needs of the elderly, comprising 16% of the district population, are particularly acute because of fixed income and declining health. Services for the elderly ought to be on an outreach, home-care basis, but existing district resources probably do not fulfill the need. Other unmet needs might be day-care facilities and adult education/social centers in the residential communities throughout Fenway-Kenmore.

### Strategy

To maximize the effectiveness of existing social services and to determine additional needs, it is necessary for the appropriate city agency to first catalogue the services available, identifying both the providers (public and private) and the service areas. With community input and the cooperation of service facilities, services can be evaluated and the demand for new elements determined. After this information is compiled, any duplication of services could be eliminated and others increased or revised to better meet community needs. Through interaction, linkages and referrals among providers and through ample publicity about service availability, the district's existing social service resources--including its many regional facilities--could be used to their maximum potential. In addition, the process of analysis will clarify needs which cannot be met by the current social service network, such as neighborhood centers for the elderly, and for which it will be necessary to request public or institutional funding. The objective documentation of needs will provide credibility for service demands and thus could lead to a greater likelihood of financing and shorter lead time in implementing new programs.





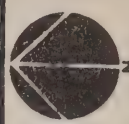


- BOYLSTON ST. REUSE
- QUALITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS
- KENMORE SQUARE TRANSFORMATION
- OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENT
- TRAFFIC CONGESTION
- INSTITUTIONAL ENCROACHMENT
- SCARCITY OF SOCIAL SERVICES (DISTRICT-WIDE)
- DISPOSITION OF URBAN RENEWAL PARCELS

## CURRENT ISSUES

FENWAY / KENMORE

0 400 800 1500 FEET







## E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1975 public investment program provides a start to solving several of the problems which face the district. It is directed at neighborhood improvement, the preservation and upgrading of open spaces, and traffic and parking solutions.

The Housing Improvement Program, which provides incentives for rehabilitating one-to-six-unit, owner-occupied dwellings, will be available throughout the district. Specific neighborhood improvements will occur as part of the continuing Fenway Urban Renewal Project. In 1975, BRA will acquire and clear key housing sites and undertake approximately \$2,057,000 in project improvements (street and alley reconstruction, lighting, sidewalks, sewer and water works, etc.) The acquisition and site preparation will involve Parcels 5, 9, 3, 7 and 13, while the general improvements will center mostly on the Seven Streets neighborhood. The new park adjacent to Morville House on Norway Street will be completed by fall, through a joint effort by the BRA, city, Christian Science Church, Morville House and Arnold Arboretum.

Improvements through the state and federally funded TOPICS program will proceed during 1975 on Commonwealth and Massachusetts Avenues, and the planning of similar traffic pedestrian and aesthetic improvements on Huntington Avenue will be continued in preparation for 1976 construction. In addition, the BRA will complete its study of the traffic problems of the roadways adjacent to and near the Fens park.

Capital improvements by the city will take the form of street lighting (\$55,000), street trees (\$288,600) and sidewalk reconstruction (\$47,700), primarily in residential sections. The Fenway Municipal Building, formerly Girls Trade School, will be renovated for city administrative and service uses (\$600,000). Major expenditures also will be made in the Fens for water pollution control and dredging, pedestrian lighting, vehicle barriers, landscaping, foot bridges and play areas (\$250,000); in Evans Park for relandscaping and new utilities (\$125,000); and along the Riverway for paths, bridges and landscaping (\$150,000).





# FENWAY / KENMORE

## 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

FENWAY / KENMORE





## F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

In addition to the ongoing and committed 1975 investments in the district, considerable public expenditures will be needed over the next few years to address the problems and challenges of Fenway-Kenmore.

To preserve and improve the housing stock and stabilize the neighborhoods, a number of investments are needed. The Mayor's Housing Improvement Program should be available throughout the district, as well as a systematic code enforcement program for residential properties. Rehabilitated and new housing, both privately financed and state or federally assisted, must augment the existing acceptable stock. In addition, a staged program of environmental improvements--involving trees, lighting, sidewalks, streets, alleys, parking and open space--is needed in the neighborhoods.

Upgrading Kenmore Square should involve the relandscaping of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, new street furniture and pedestrian amenities, a study of the traffic, parking and pedestrian access problems, enforcement of the sign code, and perhaps partial funding of a consultant real estate market analysis of the area.

Improvements in the district's open spaces and their accessibility must involve investments in the Fens and mall facilities. A study of additional needs in open space for residents--particularly the elderly and young children--should be made and new smaller parks provided if warranted.

Adjacent to the Fens and mall, traffic and parking problems must be investigated and improvements begun. Similar studies and improvements must be continued or initiated for Kenmore Square, major arterials and the particular difficulties created by the Red Sox games.

The appropriate reuse of Boylston Street could require city investment for land acquisition and infrastructure. Whether large-scale reconstruction or chiefly rehabilitation is involved, the street will require substantial improvements, including sewer and water work, street and sidewalk repair, trees and street furniture.

In the area of social service, once needs are clarified, public money might be necessary to fund elderly service and facilities, day-care programs and other items.





# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
1) Residential Area Uncertainties	Preservation and improvements of housing stock		
	a)MHIP	\$75,000 (shared with Back Bay and Beacon Hill)	50 units per year
	b)Code enforcement in Seven Streets and Audubon		Staff for concentrated inspection program
	c)Rehabilitation of problem properties in West Fens		
	d)Leased housing for elderly		200 units in West Fens; 100 units in Kenmore Square and Audubon
	e)Rent control and assessment policies		
	f)Neighborhood associations		
	g)Lodging houses		
	Environmental improvements in neighborhoods	Sewer and water work; street and alley repair; sidewalk reconstruction (\$47,700); street trees (\$288,600); lighting (\$55,000)	Staged programs of further expenditures for trees, lighting, sidewalks, alleys, streets, parking, open spaces, street furniture, sewer and water work



Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
2) Kenmore Square Transformation	Private effort:		
	a) Organization of effective civic group		
	b) Analysis of problems, potentials and investment needs		
	c) Coordination of events, hours, advertising, etc.		
	d) Upgrading of facades, signs and quality of merchandise		
	e) Effort to attract broader range of uses		
	Public effort:		
	a) Rehabilitation of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall		Program of landscaping and utility improvements for mall from Charlesgate West to Kenmore Street and from Deerfield Street to MBTA tunnel
	b) Provision of street furniture and pedestrian amenities	Trash receptacles; street trees	Bike racks, pedestrian walkways, signage, trees, curbing, sidewalk reconstruction, benches
	c) Study of potential market for residential and commercial use		Partial funding of real estate market analysis





Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
3) Open Space Improvement and Access	d)Traffic circulation and pedestrian access improvements		Study of new circulation patterns, signals, parking regulations, neckdowns, taxi stand relocation, improved pedestrian underpass
	e)Enforcement of Sign Code	Inspection by Building Dept.	Continued inspection and prosecution of violators
	f)Curtailment of "combat zone" type growth (bars, clubs, fast-food establishments)		
	Rehabilitation of Back Bay Fens and improvement of accessibility	Landscaping and utilities (\$250,000); Evans Way (\$125,000)	\$2-million in landscaping and utility work
	Rehabilitation of Commonwealth Avenue Mall Development of other open space areas	Morville House Park	(See Issue #2 Above)  Analysis of open space needs





FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
4) Disposition of Urban Renewal Parcels	Optimal reuse of remaining disposition parcels	Over \$2-million for site acquisition and clearance	Approximately \$2-million for further acquisition and clearance
5) Traffic and Parking	Alleviation of traffic congestion and improvement of pedestrian access on major arterials	TOPICS construction on Commonwealth and Massachusetts Avenues and planning for Huntington Avenue  BRA study of circulation, pedestrian access and land use of Fens area	Completion of TOPICS work  Urban Systems improvements on Huntington Avenue  Implementation of study recommendations  (See Issue #2 Above)
	Traffic circulation and pedestrian improvements in Kenmore Square		
	Reduction of negative impacts of Red Sox games at Fenway Park	Increased COB and MDC towing and ticketing	Study and implementation of Park/Shuttle service, MBTA improvements, parking facility or other solutions
6) Boylston Street Reuse	Redevelop upper Boylston Street	Lighting; sidewalk repairs	Infrastructure and street improvements, including sidewalks, sewer and water work, trees, street furniture, curbing, repaving  Financing for land acquisition or write-down



FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
7) Institutional Encroachment	Policy guidance and coordination to minimize negative impacts		
8) Scarcity of Social Services	Improved services and facilities		Elderly social/recreation center in West Fens, daycare facilities or other needs documented by ABCD study





M3/B16  
RA  
75/7  
pt. 6

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS  
DEPARTMENT  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

WORKING DRAFT  
FOR  
COMMUNITY REVIEW

FRANKLIN FIELD

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.	SHORT HISTORY	[3]
B.	EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	[5]
	1. Columbia-Blue Hill	
	2. Franklin Hill-Harvard	
	3. Franklin Field South	
	4. Woodrow-Morton	
	5. Codman Square West	
C.	PAST PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT	[8]
D.	ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	[11]
	1. Neighborhood Stabilization	
	2. Abandonment	
	3. Public Housing	
	4. Commercial Area Change	
	5. Crime	
	6. Franklin Field	
	7. Franklin Park	
E.	1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[12]
F.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS	
G.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS AS RELATED TO ISSUES, STRATEGIES AND 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[17]



## INTRODUCTION

This report prepared by the Franklin Field District Planner is a draft document meant to form the basis for discussion among residents and City representatives on planning strategies and investment needs.

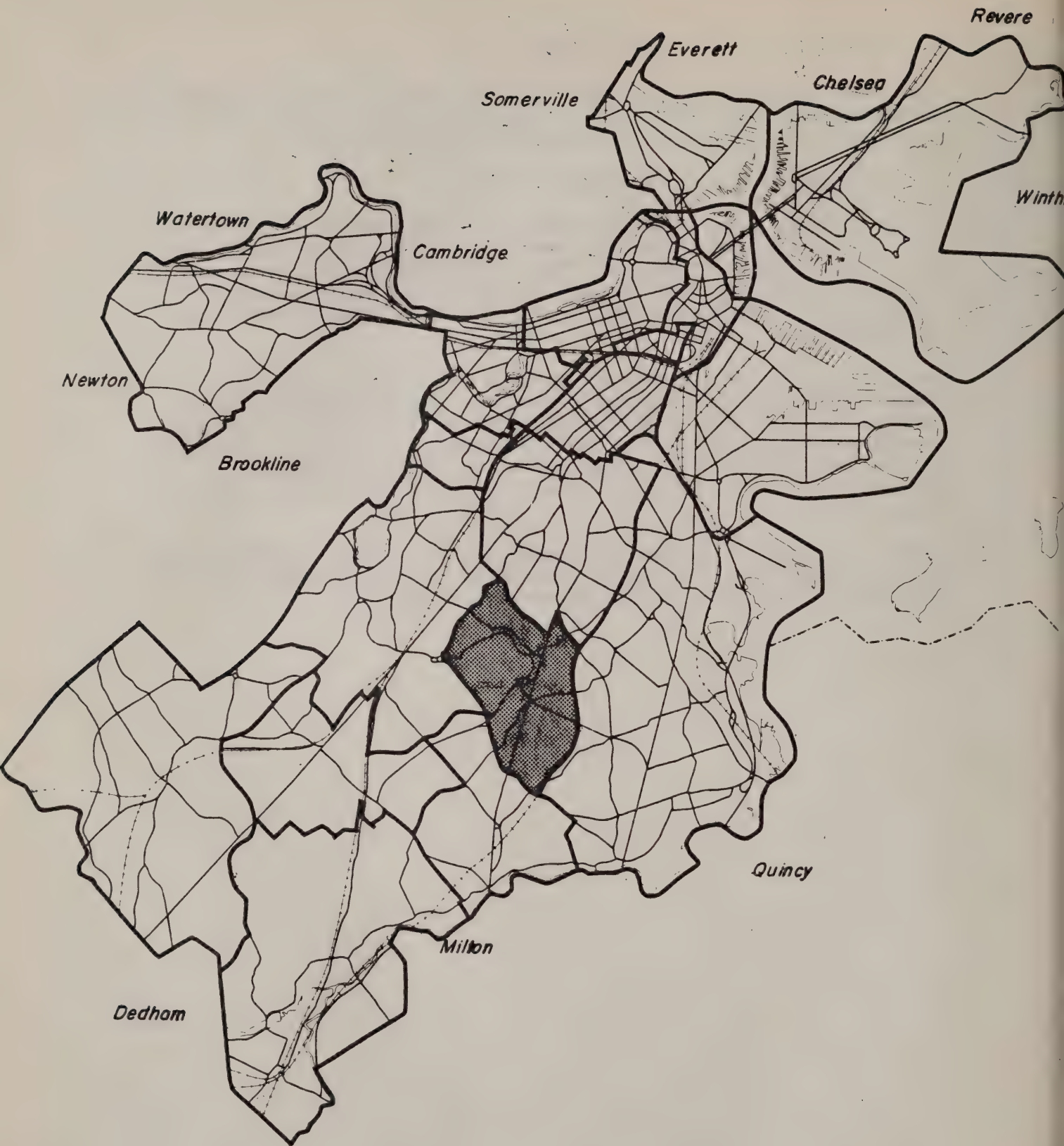
The report attempts to do a number of things:

First, it establishes a base of population, income and housing data as well as a listing and analysis of recent past public and private investment in the Franklin Field Area. This information can be used by the District Planner and others who are involved in the planning process: neighborhood residents, Little City Hall Staff and other city agencies and departments.

Second, it offers an analysis of the major issues which confront the community along with recommended strategies. These strategies should form the basis of discussion for community residents for the Community Development Block Grant and Capital Improvement participation process as well as for involvement in issues which are not addressed by City expenditures, such as rezoning, private development, or wholly funded State Programs.

Third, the report recognizes that strategies are not self-fulfilling and makes recommendations for public and private investments which are necessary to help carry out the recommended strategies.





FRANKLIN FIELD



## A. SHORT HISTORY

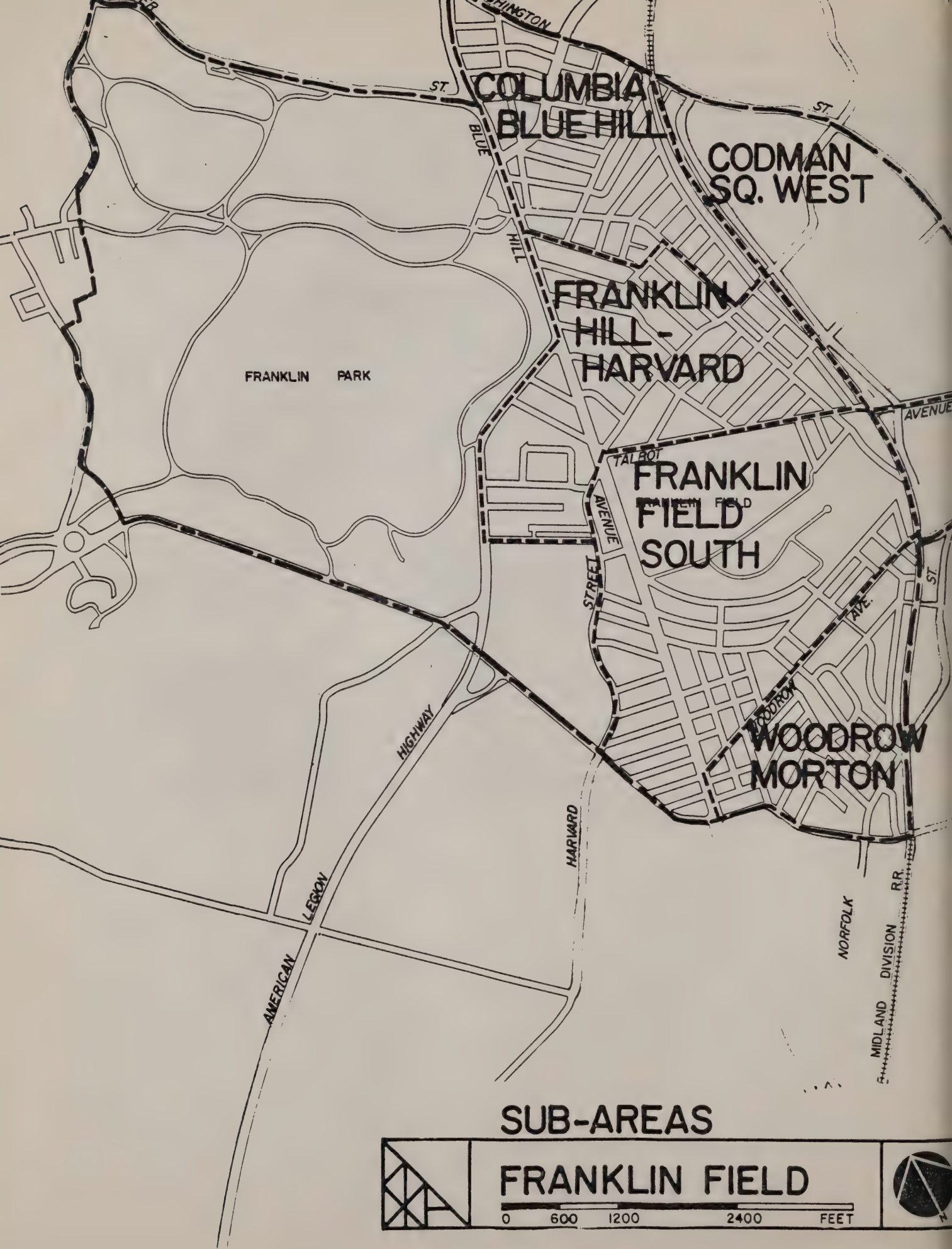
The Franklin Field area was originally a part of Dorchester which was annexed to Boston in 1870. Railroad passenger service on the Midlands Branch in 1855, and later trolley service along Blue Hill Avenue in the 1890's created a residential construction boom in the Franklin Field area. The neighborhood was densely built up with two- and three-family houses for Irish and other immigrants. The Irish were largely replaced by Jews displaced by the Chelsea Fire of 1908. The Jewish population has recently been replaced by blacks displaced by urban renewal in the 1960's.

The process of racial change and the aging housing stock had a severe effect around Franklin Field. During this transition many white owners let their homes deteriorate; houses were abandoned, mortgages were foreclosed, property was taken for back taxes. In some cases white owners who could not find buyers would move to the suburbs and operate their property (three-family, two-family, sometimes even single family houses) as absentee landlords. Real estate investors bought some buildings and "milked" them by charging as much rent as possible and providing little or no maintenance. In other cases unscrupulous real estate brokers bought houses cheaply from frightened white owners and sold them for substantially more to black buyers.

Housing abandonment has become severe just south of Franklin Field, as "milked" buildings become uninhabitable, and as owners can't afford to pay the mortgage and repair serious defects. Relatively higher unemployment among blacks in the current recession has intensified this problem.

Blue Hill Avenue is the center of this entire area; its stores and other businesses have been seriously affected by racial transition, by competition with suburban shopping centers, and by the recession. There is a very high rate of vacancy, business failure, vandalism, and general deterioration along most of the Avenue, except at potentially viable shopping nodes like Morton Street, Columbia Road, and Talbot Avenue, and especially at Mattapan Square farther south, where the city has made a major commitment to commercial center revitalization.





## SUB-AREAS

## FRANKLIN FIELD

0 600 1200 2400 FEET



## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Information on population and housing in this report is derived primarily from the 1960 and 1970 U.S. Census. For purposes of analysis, the Franklin Field Area has been divided into 5 sub-areas (see map of sub-areas):

### COLUMBIA-BLUE HILL

The northern portion of the Franklin Field Area, Columbia-Blue Hill, is bounded by Blue Hill Avenue, Washington Street, the Penn Central Railroad, and McClellan and Glenway Streets. This sub-area had little change in total population from 1960 to 1970, but underwent substantial demographic change (see table). The increase in young children is especially significant, as this area has overcrowded schools and local recreational facilities.

The housing in this area is predominantly a mixture of 1, 2, and 3 family homes, largely owner-occupied. There are some apartment buildings on Blue Hill Avenue, Columbia Road, and Washington Street. The houses are mostly in good condition, with some abandonment and dilapidation scattered through the area, and several vacant lots at the corner of Erie and Ellington Streets.

### FRANKLIN HILL-HARVARD

This neighborhood experienced a substantial increase in population as elderly households were replaced by younger households with small children. The median income is well below that of Boston as a whole, in part because of the public housing project and adjacent subsidized housing development at Franklin Hill.

Most of the housing in this area is in 1, 2, and 3 family houses, except for the low and moderate income apartments on Franklin Hill. The structures are generally sound, but there has been some deterioration due to lack of maintenance during the racial transition period. There are about 25 abandoned buildings, several of which are unfinished "Infill Housing" structures.

### FRANKLIN FIELD SOUTH

The Franklin Field neighborhood lies between Talbot Avenue and Woodrow Avenue. Total population increased only slightly due to a higher vacancy rate even though family size increased significantly. The median income is much lower than Boston as a whole, in part because of the public housing projects at Franklin Field.

The homes are mostly two- and three-family structures, with some singles and a few six-family structures. There are almost 1,000 apartments in the BHA projects at Franklin Field.

Racial transition caused some housing deterioration, because of deferred maintenance and increased absentee ownership. Vacancies and mortgage foreclosures are high, and there is one area where abandonment is very high -- about half of the 110 abandoned buildings in this neighborhood are within 3 blocks of Arbutus Street.

#### WOODROW - MORTON

This neighborhood is bounded by Woodrow Avenue, the Penn Central Tracks, Morton Street and Blue Hill Avenue. Total population increased by 12% and median income went up slightly in contrast to other parts of the Franklin Field area which had slight declines in both population and income.

The housing is mostly in two and three family structures, with some singles and six-deckers. The rate of owner occupancy is very high, and most buildings are in good condition. Abandoned buildings are scattered throughout this area.

#### CODMAN SQUARE WEST

This neighborhood is bounded by the Penn Central railroad tracks, Washington Street, Talbot Avenue, and Woodrow Avenue. Total population and median family income increased slightly in the 1960's.

The housing is a mixture of wood-frame one, two, and three family houses, with a few brick apartment buildings. The rate of owner occupancy is very high, but there have been many mortgage foreclosures and abandoned houses, some of which have been demolished. There is a large number of buildings requiring extensive renovation.

# Comparative Statistics - Franklin Field

## U.S. Census Data

<u>Population</u>	<u>Columbia- Blue Hill</u>	<u>Franklin Hill Harvard</u>	<u>Franklin Field South</u>	<u>Woodrow Morton</u>	<u>Codman Square West</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>City</u>
Total 1970	6,377	7,484	7,623	4,340	8,100	33,929	639,657
Change from '60	-4%	-5%	-4%	+12%	+2%	-2%	-8%
Total Black 1970	6,036	4,424	5,583	2,991	4,300	23,334	104,200
Total Black 1960	1,605	309	102	20	110	2,146	63,400
Aged 0-14 yrs. - 1970	2,371	2,872	3,052	1,184	2,850	12,319	
Change from '60	+34%	+36%	+29%	+49%	+30%	+34%	
Aged 64 yrs. & over	237	409	615	254	890	1,515	81,437
Change from '60	-28%	-60%	-37%	-58%	-40%	-48%	-5%
<u>Income</u>							
Median Family	\$6,900	\$6,360	\$6,120	\$7,250	\$7,800	\$ 6,950	\$ 9,133
% Change from '60							
Constant Dollars	-3%	-4%	-10%	+2%	+4%	-4%	+20%
% Families under \$5,000	32%	39%	41%	32%	25%	33%	22%
<u>Housing</u>							
Total Dwelling Units	2,010	2,470	2,480	1,390	2,480	11,830	232,856
Units Needing Fix-up in excess of \$1,000	730	1,550	1,330	550	1,130	5,290	67,102
% Owner Occupied 1-4 Family Struc- tures	80%	73%	73%	78%	80%	78%	80%
Mobility-% of House- hold in same house for less than 5 years	64%	66%	71%	67%	70%	67%	50%



### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

There have been substantial capital expenditures in the Franklin Field area since 1968, primarily on schools and large parks. The Lee Community School was constructed, at a cost of \$8,000,000, and the Bradford Elementary School was refurbished for \$480,000. Franklin Park received improvements costing \$1,300,000, and work has begun on Franklin Field, for about \$100,000.

The City of Boston also built a new fire station on Blue Hill Avenue, for \$750,000, and made \$250,000 worth of improvements to Police Station 3 on Morton Street. The Public Works Department expended \$420,000 for street and sidewalk repairs, and water and sewer improvements.

In the past two years, the City has started a demolition and boarding program for abandoned buildings. Approximately \$150,000 has been spent for demolition, and \$50,000 for boarding. There has been a small start on the Housing Improvement Program -- approximately 25 buildings have been repaired under the early 10% tax rebate program.

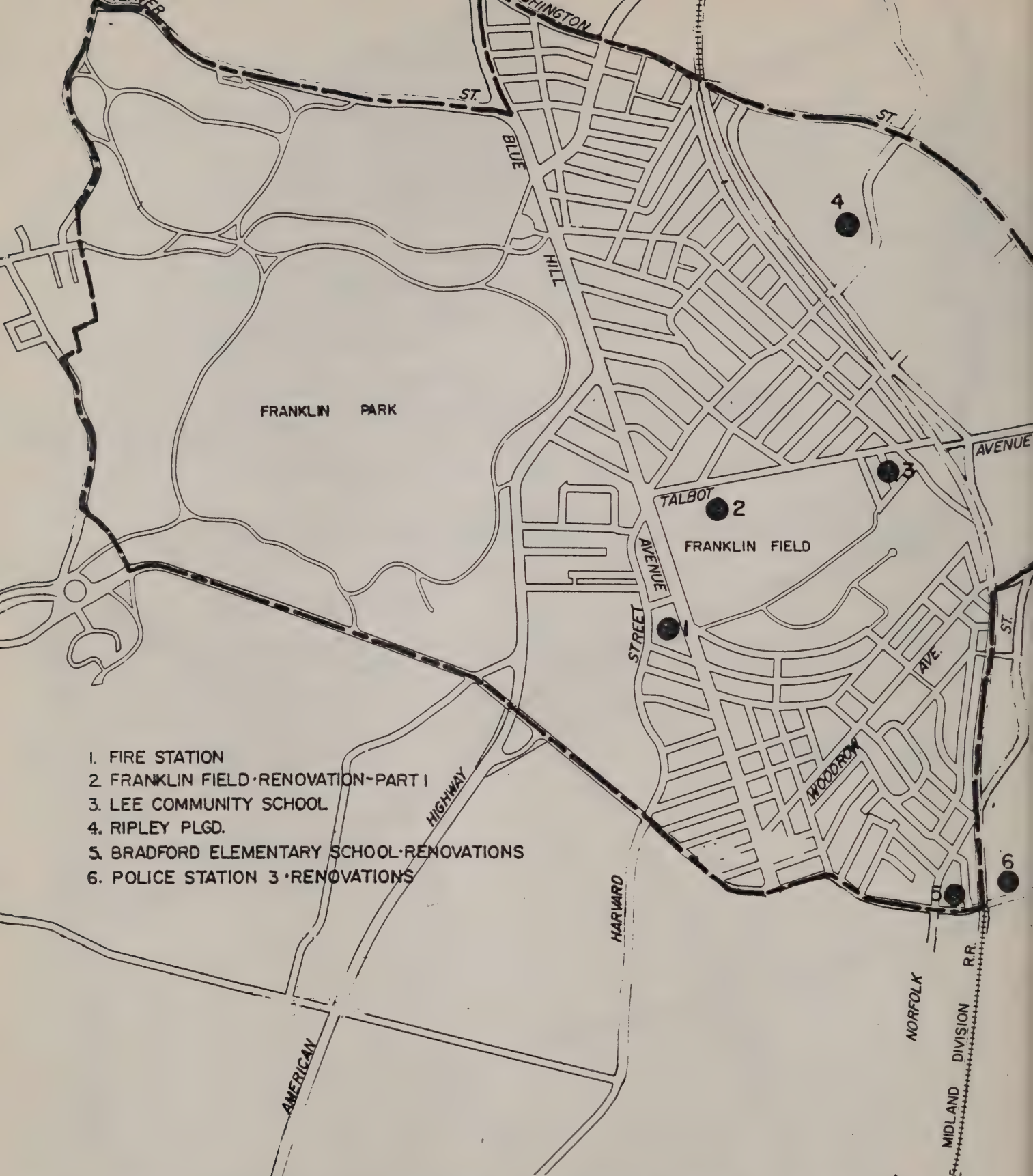
Some brick apartment buildings on Norwell Street near Washington Street and on Norfolk Street at Codman Square have been rehabilitated with MHFA loans.

### PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

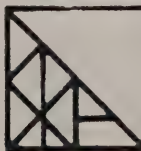
There has been very little private investment in the Franklin Field area in recent years. At the Morton Street Shopping Area several stores have been completely renovated. The Franklin Field Tennis Center has constructed indoor and outdoor tennis facilities at Franklin Field, on land leased from the City of Boston. There has been no investment for new construction or major rehabilitation of housing.







## PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74



FRANKLIN FIELD

0 600 1200 2400 FEET





## D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

### 1. NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION

#### Issue

The residential neighborhoods in the Franklin Field area are basically sound. Most of the houses are structurally solid and have many years of useful life left. But these neighborhoods are threatened with decline due to several forces. Many houses need minor interior and exterior repairs and some require major renovation. Home repair loans are difficult to obtain, and owners often don't have the cash for needed repairs. Prospective home buyers are frequently unable to find mortgages because banks fear continuing decline. There are problems with old water and sewer lines, and many streets and sidewalks need repair and improvement. All of these factors contribute to a vicious circle of self-fulfilling prophecy and increasing loss of confidence by residents and banks. This self-reinforcing process must be broken by counteracting all of these negative forces.

#### Strategy

The new Housing Improvement Program which gives homeowners a cash grant of 20% of the estimated cost of needed repairs will enable many owners to improve their property. This program will also help owners secure home improvement loans. Visible repairs in a neighborhood can start a positive cycle of restored confidence and additional repairs by owners who realize their neighbors are staying and working. To reinforce this positive effect, the Housing Improvement Program should conduct a door-to-door public relations campaign in selected target areas for maximum visibility and impact.

The Housing Inspection Department should inspect badly dilapidated building in these target areas, to strongly encourage the repair of "eyesores" which discourage nearby homeowners from making expensive repairs.

The City and community must work together to encourage banks to give mortgages and home repair loans in this area. The State Banking Commissioner has now ordered banks to disclose the geographic pattern of their deposits and loans. When this information is available, the City should work closely with community groups, local banks, and the Banking Commission to develop policies or legislation that will prevent "red-lining".





- NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION
- HOUSING ABANDONMENT
- PUBLIC HOUSING
- COMMERCIAL DECLINE
- CRIME
- OPEN AREA

# CURRENT ISSUES

## FRANKLIN FIELD

0 600 1200 2400 FEET



The City should proceed with a major public relations effort to promote confidence on the part of current residents, and also to encourage replacement buyers to seek housing in Dorchester, Franklin Field, and Mattapan. Promotional brochures should be published highlighting neighborhood preservation and rehabilitation efforts, areas of architectural and historic interest, new or innovative public and private improvements, and the general quality of life available in this area of Boston.

There are many vacant lots from building demolition scattered throughout the residential neighborhoods in the Franklin Field area. Some of these lots are or will be owned by the City. Under the new Vacant Lot Program, the abutters will be offered these lots at very low cost, to enlarge their yards for gardens, play areas, or parking. This program will transform a community liability into a community asset.

Boston's ongoing Capital Improvement Program should be planned so as to have the maximum positive impact on neighborhood stabilization. The residential areas where the Housing Improvement Program will be concentrating should also be scheduled for public works as needed, for instance street and sidewalk repairs, street lights, water and sewer improvements, and street trees.

This coordinated program of positive forces will hopefully combine to reverse the circle of despair and dilapidation.

## 2. ABANDONMENT

### Issue

Housing abandonment has been a serious problem in the Franklin Field area for several years. Abandonment has many causes: fire, crime, lack of mortgage or home improvement loans, disinvestment by absentee owners, inability of tenants or homeowners to pay the full cost of the housing they occupy, mortgage or tax foreclosure, etc. Owners or tenants living near abandoned buildings lose confidence in the neighborhood, cut back on maintenance, or move out of the area. Thus abandonment leads to further neighborhood decline and more abandonment.

### Strategy

To effectively deal with abandoned buildings, the City must establish a process of FAST condemnation, FAST decision on rehabilitation possibilities, and FAST demolition when needed. The City should also try various incentives to encourage new homeowners to acquire and repair structurally sound buildings.



Possible incentives would be: an increased Housing Improvement Program grant, tax forgiveness for 3 to 5 years after purchase, or some labor provided by the City from the Federal Comprehensive Employment Training Act Program.

In a few areas, large tracts of vacant land will result from the demolition of unsalvageable buildings. These large lots should be held for future development, and the City should work with nearby residents, developers, and banks to plan appropriate reuses for these potentially valuable pieces of land.

### 3. PUBLIC HOUSING

#### Issue

In recent years, the Franklin Hill and Franklin Field housing projects have fallen into disrepair because of lack of maintenance and modernization. Increasing vacancies have also detracted from the projects' image and security. If these trends continue, fewer and fewer people will be willing to live there if any other choices exist, and the projects could become centers of deterioration and crime.

#### Strategy

The Boston Housing Authority has started a process of renovation and modernization of these projects, and initiated a "full occupancy" policy. This will require a substantial capital investment, but most of the expense should be paid by the State or Federal Governments. The renovation can be scheduled so that no tenants are displaced, because of the current number of vacant apartments. In addition the B.H.A. should expand their modernization program and improve their normal repair and maintenance program.

### 4. COMMERCIAL AREA CHANGE

#### Issue

The Blue Hill Avenue shopping corridor has also suffered abandonment and decline. During the riots in 1968, many stores were vandalized or burned. Shopkeepers lost confidence and moved out as soon as they could, or stayed but didn't modernize their stores. Shopping habits have been changing, favoring large stores and suburban-style shopping centers to the detriment of many older shopping areas with small stores and very little convenient parking.

## Strategy

Blue Hill Avenue is the heart of this district, and it must be restored as the center of community and business activity. Initial efforts have thus far focused on Mattapan Square, where the City has made improvements designed to encourage shoppers to come to the Square. Expenditures for street and sidewalk improvements, lighting, off-street parking and tree planting have totalled approximately \$800,000. This fairly modest investment has led local businessmen to fix up their stores both inside and out and has attracted new stores and offices to the Square; private improvements completed or planned will total at least \$4,000,000, and the commercial vacancy rate has declined to 3%.

Similar improvements should be made in the shopping areas at Morton Street, Columbia Road, Callender Street and Talbot Avenue. But there are many stores along Blue Hill Avenue outside of these economically viable shopping nodes. The City should encourage the conversion of the excess commercial property to other uses such as housing, recreation, cultural facilities, or job producing businesses.

In some of the shopping areas, vacant land or vacant stores should be taken by the City and small off-street parking lots should be provided for the convenience of shoppers.

## 5. CRIME

### Issue

Crime has become a serious problem in the Franklin Field area. Fear of crime has contributed to residential instability and commercial area decline. There are several spots where drug traffic is high. Alcoholism is increasing among the area's youth. Vandalism, theft, and arson occur in abandoned buildings. Robberies and purse snatchings have reduced the commercial viability of Blue Hill Avenue. Residents, especially households where no one is home during the day, are fearful of burglaries.

### Strategy

More effective police protection is the most important element in reducing crime and the fear of crime. Additional foot patrolmen should be assigned to the commercial areas, and the existing "walk and talk" program where police get out of their patrol cars and meet local merchants should be emphasized. The City should assist groups of merchants in arranging cooperative security plans similar to others developed in South Boston and Brighton.



As one part of the boarding and demolition program, Police District 3 should periodically receive a list of vacant salvageable buildings which they should check daily. The police in turn should report to the Little City Hall boarded buildings which have been broken into or vandalized beyond repair.

The police department should develop a community relations program in the residential neighborhoods, and should try to improve crime reporting by residents and more effective response to emergency calls. Further, the City and community should jointly pursue programs and activities for teenagers.

## 6. FRANKLIN FIELD

### Issue

The Franklin Field playground has fallen into serious disrepair because of both vandalism and lack of maintenance. The recreational needs of nearby residents have changed in recent years.

### Strategy

The City has developed a master plan for Franklin Field, in cooperation with local residents. The plan calls for major renovations and provision of a wide variety of athletic facilities, including areas for football, baseball, basketball, soccer, cricket, and mini-bikes, in addition to the skating, hockey, and swimming facilities currently furnished by the M.D.C. This plan should be carried out as quickly as possible.

The City should continue to assist the Franklin Field Tennis Center to improve the appearance of the southwest corner of the field, and increase the visibility of this city-wide tennis facility.

## 7. FRANKLIN PARK

### Issue

In recent years the park has lost most of its city-wide service area. Consequently, the park is underutilized since large numbers of residents perceive the park as a high crime area. A major deterrent to the use of the park is its shoddy appearance and lack of maintenance, particularly along the public drives and peripheral roads where trash and debris have accumulated. It is clear, however, that a strong demand exists for the types of recreation opportunities which could exist at Franklin Park. This is substantiated by the heavy use of two similar landscape parks in the area - Arnold Arboretum and Dorchester Park. Because of its reputation for poor



security, coupled with the lack of maintenace and activity, however, Franklin Park has acquired a stigma which is overcome only when large events are scheduled such as kite flying and bicycle races.

### Strategy

The development of the \$8,000,000 Metropolitan Zoo coupled with the rehabilitation of the "Rambler Building" on Blue Hill Avenue will create a much more positive environment for the park and presents an opportunity that can help change its image. Additional programs, therefore, must be pursued simultaneously so as to ensure that the park is upgraded. These include improved maintenance, capital improvements (improved signing, barriers and landscaping), programing special events and finally a public relations program.

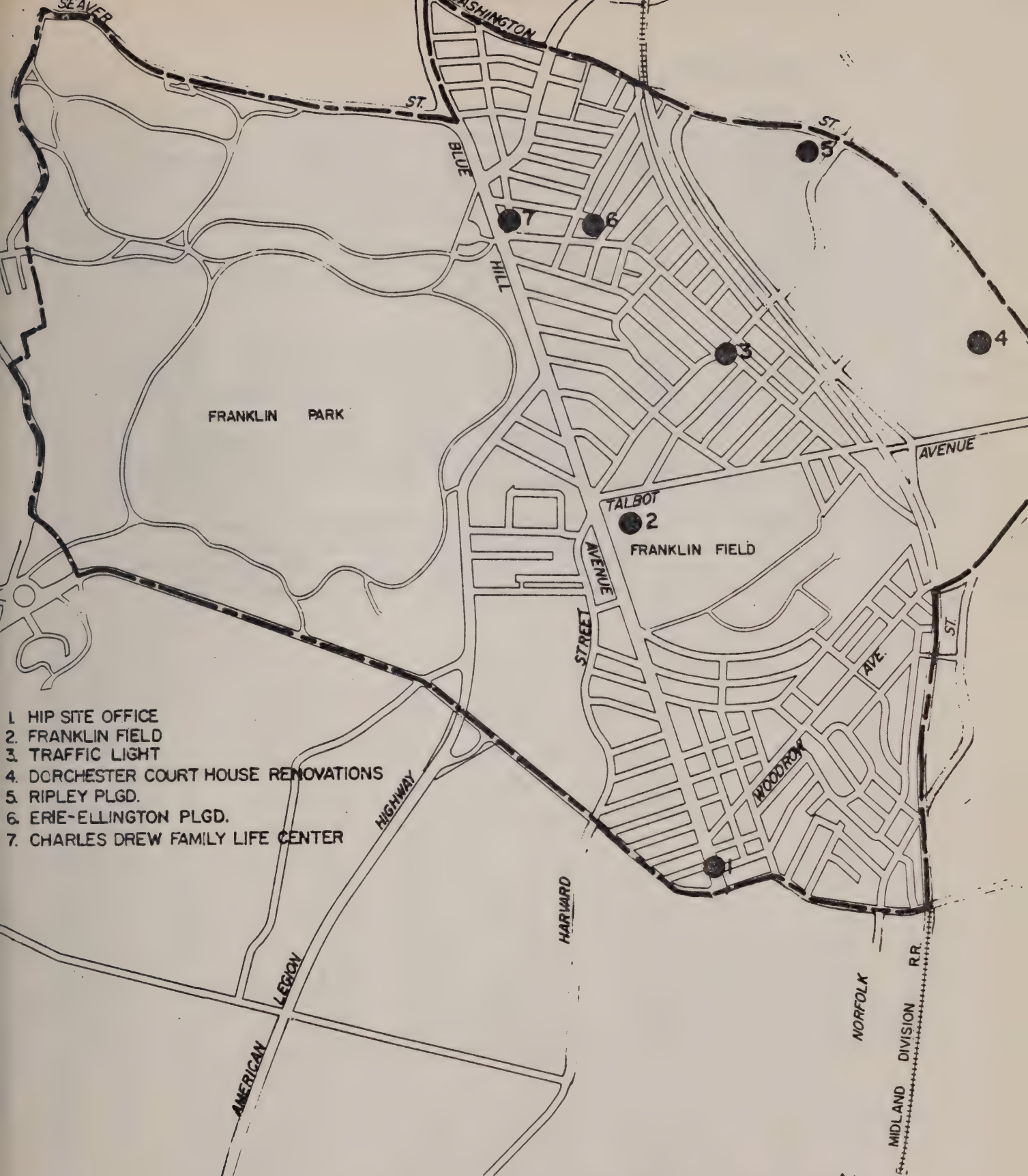
E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The City of Boston will be investing \$2.5 million in 1975 for improvements in the Franklin Field Area. Part of the funds will be provided by the Federal Community Development Revenue Sharing Program, and part by the City's Capital Budget.

A major commitment has been made to neighborhood stabilization. \$400,000 will be spent on demolition or boarding of vacant buildings, fix-up grants for owner occupied homes, and sale of vacant lots. The demolition and boarding program will be developed in cooperation with community residents and the Little City Hall, and there will be a local site office on Blue Hill Avenue for the Housing Improvement Program. In addition, the City will be spending \$250,000 for improvements for residential streets, sidewalks and street lighting.

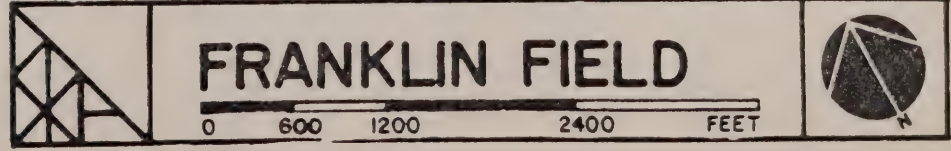
Increased health and social services will be provided by the new Charles Drew Family Life Center, now under construction at a total cost of \$1.2 million. This facility will also contribute to the revitalization of the shopping area at Blue Hill Avenue and Columbia Road, which will be benefiting from the major redevelopment of the Franklin Park Zoo.

Franklin Field will be extensively reconstructed at a cost of at least \$500,000 in accordance with the plans developed in conjunction with community residents. A new playground will be developed for \$80,000 at the corner of Erie Street and Ellington Street, and Ripley playground will be refurbished for \$17,000.



- 1. HIP SITE OFFICE
- 2. FRANKLIN FIELD
- 3. TRAFFIC LIGHT
- 4. DORCHESTER COURT HOUSE RENOVATIONS
- 5. RIPLEY PLGD.
- 6. ERIE-ELLINGTON PLGD.
- 7. CHARLES DREW FAMILY LIFE CENTER

## 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM



FRANKLIN FIELD



## F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

In order to stabilize the residential neighborhoods and arrest the process of decline and abandonment, the City must increase the programs for neighborhood improvement. The Housing Improvement Program should be programmed for at least 250 buildings for at least five years. Demolition and boarding should be continued, although hopefully less will be needed in subsequent years. Neighborhood capital improvements will be needed in all sections of the area. In particular, an engineering study should be done to determine the best method for upgrading the existing water and sewer lines.

There are several potential development parcels in the Franklin Field Area which will require some public investment to stimulate or accompany private development. Two of these areas are at Lorne Street behind Lena Park and around Arbutus Street. Both sites consist of almost entirely vacant parcels and would require a minimum public commitment to stimulate investment. Ideally, development should be geared toward owner occupied units or buildings.

Franklin Park needs a commitment of public money for long overdue improvements, although this investment could be phased over a number of years. Franklin Field needs approximately \$650,000 in additional funds to complete the master plan prepared in 1973.

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Neighborhood Stabilization	Housing Fix-up	HIP = \$60,000	HIP - at least 250 buildings per year
	'Code Enforcement' in MHIP Target Areas		Provide staff support for informal "eyesore" code enforcement
	Vacant lot sales	Vacant Lot Program = \$50,000	Vacant Lot Program at least 50 lots per year
	Mortgages and Home Improvement Loans		
	Capital Improvements in neighborhoods - e.g., streets, sidewalks, trees, water 7 sewers, street lights, parks	PWD = \$241,000 Ripley playground = \$60,000 Erie-Ellington playground = \$80,000	Continue Public Works improvements Plant trees on streets with high owner occupancy Continue improvements to neighborhood parks
Abandonment	Demolition of worst buildings	Demolition Program = \$225,000	Continue demolitions, approx. 50 buildings per year
	Board-up abandoned buildings if salvageable	Boarding Program = \$62,500	Continue board-up, approx. 75 buildings per year
	Restore abandoned housing to use by tax forgiveness, CETA, etc.		Commitment from City Treasurer and/or Assessor to forgive taxes, plus HIP
	Redevelop large vacant parcels		Land assembly, utility improvements

G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Public Housing	Renovate and modernize the public housing projects	Franklin Hill Project Modernization = \$40,000	Major renovation needed at Franklin Hill and Franklin Field Projects
Commercial Area	Improve appearance and security Improve convenience	Commercial lighting on Blue Hill Avenue = \$35,000	Additional lighting Storefront Rehab Off-street parking
Crime	Improve security of commercial areas  Improve security of residential neighborhoods Reduce vandalism and theft in vacant buildings Reduce juvenile crime		
Franklin Field	Complete planned improvements Increase visible use	\$450,000	\$650,000 to complete Master Plan Tennis Club expansion and landscaping To be determined
Franklin Park	Develop Franklin Park as major resource for city, primarily as passive recreation facility and in conjunction with major development at zoo		



M3/B16  
RA  
75/7  
pt. 7

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS  
DEPARTMENT  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

WORKING UNIT  
FOR  
COMMUNITY

BMA-0160

# HYDE PARK

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June 1975



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION

I.	BACKGROUND INFORMATION	1
A.	Short History	
B.	Existing Characteristics	
C.	Past Public Investment	
D.	Past Private Investment	
II.	PLANNING ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	15
A.	Residential Stability	
B.	Reuse of Southwest Corridor Land	
C.	Need for Capital Improvements	
D.	Commercial Revitalization of Cleary Square	
E.	Retention of Open and Underutilized Vacant Land	
III.	1975 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM	21
A.	Housing	
B.	Commercial Area Revitalization	
C.	Capital Improvements	
D.	Neighborhood Services	
IV.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS	23





## INTRODUCTION

This planning report, prepared by the Hyde Park District Planner, is intended to assist local residents and City officials who are defining the needs of the Hyde Park District. The report is divided into four major sections. The first section covers the background of the district including a short history, recent census data, and private and public construction activity during the past five years. The second part highlights a number of physical planning issues which concern residents in Hyde Park. Preliminary strategies which address these issues are also suggested in this section. The third part of the report summarizes the 1975 public investment program for Hyde Park. Section four outlines public projects and activities which should be undertaken by the City or other governmental organizations.



HYDE PARK





## I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### A. SHORT HISTORY

Originally part of Dorchester, Dedham and Milton, Hyde Park became a town in 1868. In 1912, Hyde Park was the last district to be annexed to the City. Early settlement began during the 1840's and 1850's shortly before the Civil War. By 1856 there were over 200 homes established in the Fairmount section. After 1865, growth in Hyde Park was rapid. Commuter train service was extended along the Penn Central tracks and new churches and streets were built to serve the new neighborhoods. While Readville, the industrial center of the district, was already settled with the Tileston and Hollingsworth Paper Mill (the oldest factory in Hyde Park), the Sunnyside section and the remainder of the Fairmount section was developed at this time.

A general dissatisfaction with the town water rates and service is often given as the reason why a majority of Hyde Park's 3,000 odd voters decided in the November 1911 election to join the City of Boston. Over the years, however, there have been stirrings by Hyde Park residents to return to the status of a Town. In 1962 because of dissatisfaction with the proposed Southwest Expressway, which would start at Roxbury Crossing and slice through Roslindale and Hyde Park to link up with Rte. 128 in Canton, residents petitioned their legislators to sever Hyde Park from the City and to join Norfolk County. This effort failed to win a majority support of the legislators although later during Governor Sargeant's Administration the expressway proposal was finally withdrawn.

### B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Hyde Park, located in the southwest quadrant of the City, surrounded by West Roxbury, Mattapan, Roslindale and Milton, was one of the few district's in the city to gain population between 1960 and 1970. Its increase of 28% to 36,509 exceeded West Roxbury's 24% growth and the City's loss of 8% of its population during this period.

Because the district is composed of a high percentage of 1-2 family owner-occupied structures, the largest age group is under 17 years. However, in a recent Boston Housing Authority (BHA) report on the need for elderly housing in the City, Hyde Park ranked in the top priority group because of its number of elderly in the low income category and its long elderly waiting list for entry into existing Hyde Park BHA developments.

In 1970 median family income for Hyde Park was \$10,693, about \$1,500 above the City median, while the proportion of families earning below \$5,000 annually was below that of the City.



WEST ST/RIVER ST

GEORGE WRIGHT  
GOLF COURSE

STONY BROOK

STONY BROOK  
RESERVATION

GEORGE-  
TOWN

CLEARY  
SQUARE

TRUMAN  
HIGHWAY

READVILLE

SUB-AREAS  
HYDE PARK

0 965 1730 3460 FEET



Hyde Park contained 10,738 housing units in 1970, an increase from 1960 of 16%. The majority of this growth was in the western half of the district where new single family construction and multi-family units have been completed.

Cleary Square, the commercial center of Hyde Park, has had some storefront deterioration in recent years, as well as increasing store turnovers to retail uses, such as fast food and discount stores. Based on a vacancy survey of the Square's 165 stores during the summer of 1974, 16 (10%) were vacant. Basic problems to the Square are lack of convenient off-street parking, poor traffic circulation and crime. Nevertheless, the recent opening of Star Market and Osco Drugs along Hyde Park Avenue at the southern portion of the Square may be a healthy sign of economic revival.

The following is a discussion of Hyde Park's sub-areas.

1. River/West Streets

Located in the northeastern portion of the district, this sub-area is bounded by Mattapan and Roslindale. In 1970, its population was 14,837, an increase of 12% over 1960. This growth can be attributed to new apartment construction in the Cummins Highway/American Legion Highway area.

Median family income ranged between \$10,289 and \$10,937, which is nearly the district median.

In 1970, there were 4,714 housing units in the River-West Streets area of which approximately 600 units needed repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. Most of these units were located in the vicinity of the Cummins Tower Apartments and American Legion Highway.

This area has a relatively low percentage of owner-occupied units (28%) relative to the overall district (58%).

2. Cleary Square

Located in the central portion of Hyde Park, Cleary Square is bounded by the Stonybrook Reservation, West Street, Neponset River and Readville. Its 1970 population was 8,153, a gain of 31% over 1960. Much of this growth can be attributed to new single-family home construction in the area west of Penn Central railroad tracks.

Since 1960, Cleary Square's elderly population has grown by 14% compared to the City's loss of 18%. Median family income was comparable to the district-wide median of \$10,700, and only 13% of total families in 1970 had median incomes under \$5,000.



Of the 2,689 units counted in 1970, 339 (13%) needed repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. Most of this housing is located south of Cleary Square.

There are also a number of apartment houses in this sub-area, many of which are located along River Street near Cleary Square. Almost 55% of the structures are owner-occupied.

3. Truman Highway

In 1970, Truman Highway's population was 7,017, an increase of 29% over 1960. This growth was primarily due to new single-family home construction.

The population in this sub-area showed a high growth of elderly (24%) and youth 15-19 (33%) during the last decade. Median Family income was \$11,057 which exceeded the district's median of \$10,693.

In 1970, only 125 housing units in this sub-area, representing 4% of total units, required repairs exceeding \$1,000. These houses were generally concentrated near Truman Highway.

Approximately 63% of Truman Highway's total units were owner-occupied.

4. Stonybrook/Georgetown

Located near West Roxbury in the western portion of the district, this sub-area is centered on the Georgetown Housing development which was completed during the late 1960's. In 1970, this area contained 878 housing units and 2,674 people (all from Georgetown). Median family income (\$10,289) was slightly below the district-wide median and the number of families earning less than \$5,000 was 462 (12%).

5. Readville

Located in the southern portion of the district and bounded by the Town of Dedham, Stonybrook Reservation, Cleary Square, and the Neponset River, this sub-area is generally viewed as a separate neighborhood within the Hyde Park community. In 1970, its population was 4,149, an increase of 25% over 1960. This growth is a result of new apartment and single-family home construction.

Median family income ranges from \$10,289 to \$11,051, slightly higher than the district-wide median, and 15% of the total families have median incomes under \$5,000.

Of the 2,593 housing units recorded in 1970, 291 (11%) required repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. Most of these units are located in the older portion of Readville, south of Neponset Valley Parkway. Approximately 53% of Readville's total units are owner-occupied.

Readville's only commercial center comprises the stores along Neponset Valley Parkway near Hyde Park Avenue. This center is old and contains no more than 10 establishments. North of Readville along Truman Highway is the recently constructed shopping center which includes a supermarket and several service and retail establishments.

# Comparative Statistics - Hyde Park

## 1970 U.S. Census Data

<u>Population</u>	<u>River/ West Street</u>	<u>Cleary Square</u>	<u>Truman Highway</u>	<u>Stonybro Georgeton</u>
Total 1970	14,837	8,153	7,017	2,675
Change from '60	+12%	+31%	+29%	NA
Aged 15-19 yrs.	1,413	585	719	223
Change from '60	+16%	+11%	+33%	NA
Aged 20-24 yrs. 1970	1,204	587	513	181
Change from '60	+40%	+34%	+46%	NA
Aged 65 yrs. & over 1970	1,778	802	697	199
Change from '60	+15%	+14%	+24%	NA
<u>Income</u>				
Median Family	\$10,289- 10,939	\$10,289- 10,662	\$11,057	\$10,289
% Families under \$5,000	4%	13%	12%	12%
<u>Housing</u>				
Total Dwelling Units	4,714	2,689	2,840	878
Units Needing Repairs in excess of \$1,000	580	339	125	29
Owner Occupied Units	24%	54%	63%	0%
Mobility of Residents- %Residents in same house over 5 years in 1970	65%	65%	65%	60%

NA = not available



# Comparative Statistics - Hyde Park

## 1970 U.S. Census Data

<u>Population</u>	<u>Readville</u>	<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>CITY</u>
Total 1970	4,149	36,509	639,803
Change from '60	+25%	+28%	-8%
Aged 15-19 yrs.	380	3,037	60,900
Change from '60	+22%	+15%	+17%
Aged 20-24 yrs. 1970	441	2,819	76,958
Change from '60	+38%	+38%	+41%
Aged 65 yrs. & over 1970	409	3,749	81,437
Change from '60	+13%	+14%	-5%
<u>Income</u>			
Median Family	\$10,289- 11,051	\$10,693	\$9,133
% Families under \$5,000	14.5%	12%	22%
<u>Housing</u>			
Total Dwelling Units	2,593	10,735	232,401
Units Needing Repairs in excess of \$1,000	291	1,364	67,102
Owner Occupied Units	53%	58%	27%
Mobility of Residents- %Residents in same house over 5 years in 1970	65%	65%	50%



1. ROSS FIELD FLOODLIGHTS
2. SMITH FIELD PLGD. RENOVATIONS
3. NEW HYDE PARK FIRE STATION
4. READVILLE PLGD. RENOVATIONS

**PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74**

**HYDE PARK**

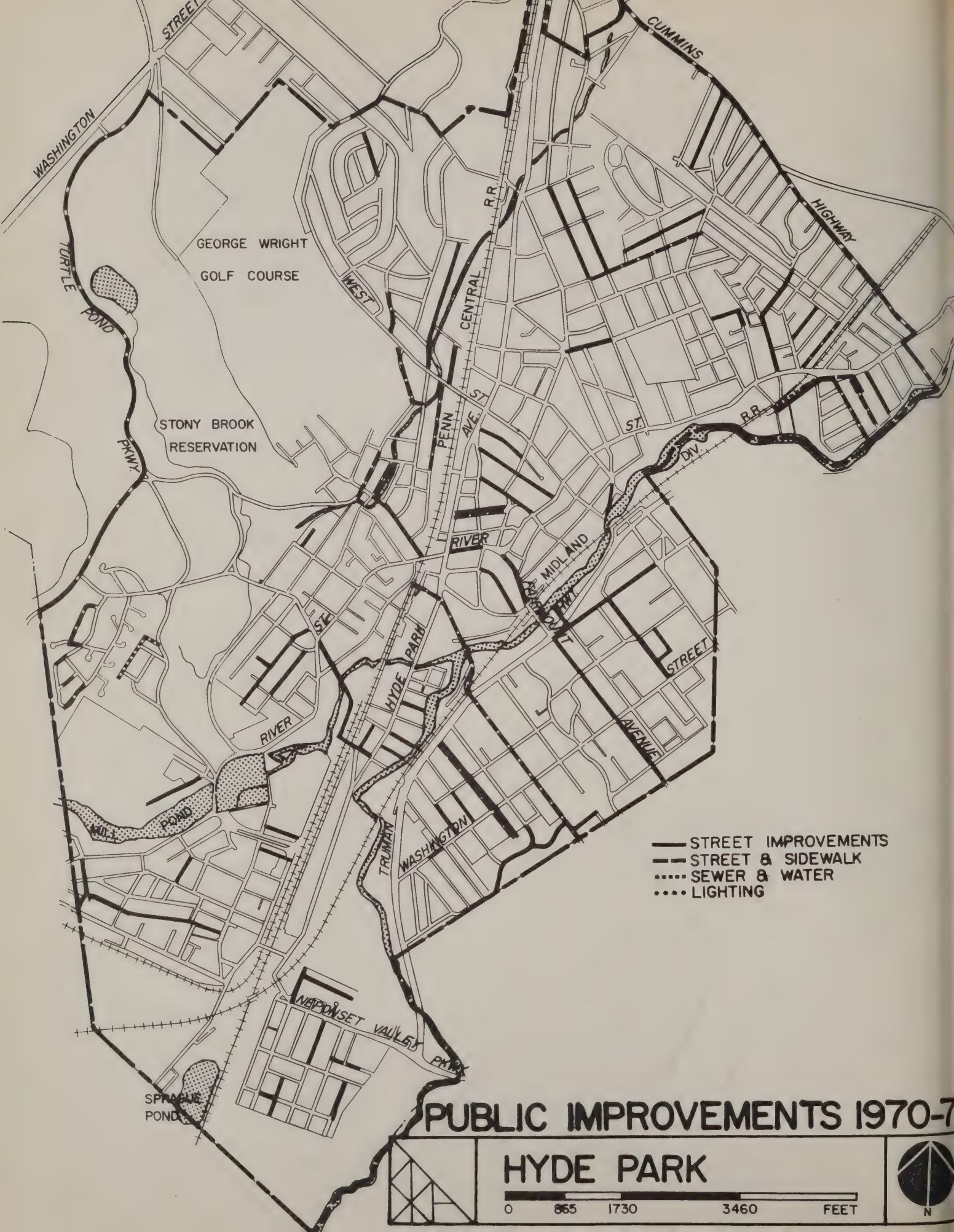
0 865 1730 3460 FEET



### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Since 1970 the major thrust of the City's Capital Improvement Program has been in strengthening neighborhoods through the construction and renovation of community facilities and parks, the reconstruction of streets and replacement of sewer and water lines. The City spent \$700,000 on the construction of a new Hyde Park Fire Station on Fairmount Avenue; \$60,000 for renovations to Readville Playground; \$150,000 for floodlights at Ross Field; and \$4,800 for renovations to Smith Field Playground. (See Public Facilities map.) At the same time, there were over 70 streets reconstructed or resurfaced, 5 streets that underwent sewer or water line replacements, 16 sidewalks replaced, 6 streets with new lighting including new sodium vapor commercial lighting in Cleary Square, and over 100 streets with increased lighting intensity. (See Public Improvements map).





#### D. PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

A review of building permits for construction activity in excess of \$10,000 indicates that there has been residential, retail, office, manufacturing and institutional investment in Hyde Park. The majority of new construction has been in the form of new single-family housing in scattered sites, and new multi-family units of the Georgetown apartment development. Most of the retail and office activity has occurred along River Street and Hyde Park Avenue.

Industrial development has also been concentrated along River Street and Hyde Park Avenue. The most substantial industrial investment was a new warehouse at 101 Sprague Street.





PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1970-74

HYDE PARK

0 865 1730 3460 FEET





## II. PLANNING ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

### A. RESIDENTIAL STABILITY

#### Issues

There are three areas which have shown signs of housing deterioration: 1) the residential area south of Cleary Square between the Penn Central Midland and Main Line Branch Railroads contains a number of homes in need of moderate exterior repairs; 2) the residential section along the Penn Central Mainline Branch in Readville has a number of homes in need of moderate to extensive exterior repairs; and 3) there are a number of residential structures in fair to poor condition along Summer Street owned by the State Department of Public Works (DPW).

In addition, while there are extensive areas of single family homes in Hyde Park, there are insufficient low and moderate income units for elderly residents. A recent Boston Housing Authority study of the need for elderly housing indicated that Hyde Park was one of six areas in the City having a significant need.

#### Strategies

The establishment of a better funded and more extensive Housing Improvement Program (HIP) for Hyde Park will help stabilize those areas with housing deterioration, although special action will be needed to renovate state-owned structures along Summer Street (this is described below). During 1975, Hyde Park residents will be able to apply for funds under the HIP program at a site office located in the Municipal Building at Cleary Square. Funds will be available for approximately 200 buildings.

Although there are no new elderly housing projects currently programmed for Hyde Park, the State Department of Community Affairs has shown interest in developing an elderly project on State DPW-owned land along Summer Street using State Chapter 667 funds. In addition, the Harlow Lumber site is being considered for elderly housing and a site at Truman Highway and Fairmount Avenue is being discussed for an elderly housing development under a financing arrangement with the Massachusetts Housing and Finance Agency (MHFA).

## B. REUSE OF SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR LAND

### Issues

Approximately 6 acres of vacant land and a number of structures are located within the Hyde Park section of the Penn Central Southwest Corridor. Since the late 1960's when this land was first purchased by the State Department of Public Works for extension of Interstate 95 through the City, this land has been allowed to deteriorate. During the past two years, there has been various proposals for reuse of the vacant land and the resale of existing structures to homeowners; however, no final actions have been taken by the State.

### Strategies

The resale of Southwest Corridor land should be expedited as should the proposal for new elderly housing sponsored by the State Department of Community Affairs on DPW-owned land at Gordon Avenue and Summer Street. This strategy will help to stabilize this area.

## C. NEED FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

### Issues

There are a variety of problems in Hyde Park's neighborhoods which should be addressed through expenditure of city funds on capital items. These problems include inadequate water pressure in neighborhoods adjacent to the Milton town line, vandalism to Ross Fieldhouse, insufficient street lights in older residential areas, bridge resurfacing and repairs (Milton, West and River Street bridges) and inadequate facilities such as Readville fire station and George White Health Center.

### Strategies

The City's strategy for approaching these problems should include accelerated use of Capital funds for a systematic water line replacement program in the district, extension of new street lighting to the older neighborhoods, bridge reconstruction, and upgrading of Readville fire station.

## D. COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION OF CLEARY SQUARE

### Issues

Cleary Square is Hyde Park's major commercial center. The Square's problems include a 10% vacancy rate, lack of convenient off-street parking, traffic congestion, and crime. Like most of Boston's older commercial centers, Cleary Square has had problems in holding its customers because of competition from nearby suburban centers in Quincy, Milton and Dedham.





GEORGE WRIGHT  
GOLF COURSE

STONY BROOK  
RESERVATION

RIVER

SPRAGUE  
POND

- 1. ROSS FIELDHOUSE
- 2. WEST ST. BRIDGE
- 3. CLEARY SQUARE
- 4. RIVER ST. BRIDGES
- 5. MILTON ST. BRIDGE
- SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR
- OPEN LAND
- COMMERCIAL

## CURRENT ISSUES

## HYDE PARK

0 865 1730 3460 FEET





### Strategies

Major efforts to stimulate retail business in the Square should be initiated by the Board of Trade, an active group of business leaders in the Square. The Board's efforts at organizing "special sale" days and other promotion activities should be coupled with encouraging merchants to improve their storefronts.

The City's efforts to improve Cleary Square during 1975 focus on the development of an off-street parking lot in the area between Hyde Park Avenue and the Penn Central Mainline tracks. This will require the demolition of the old Top Dollar Market. The introduction of new sodium vapor lights along River Street and Hyde Park Avenue should help reduce crime and vandalism in the Square.

The City's strategy in future years should include: 1) encouraging merchants to improve their storefronts; 2) planting new trees along River Street; 3) completing a traffic and circulation study along River Street, Hyde Park Avenue, Winthrop Street and along other congested routes; and 4) elimination of billboards from the Square.

## E. RETENTION OF OPEN AND UNDERUTILIZED VACANT LAND

### Issues

The amount of open and vacant land in Hyde Park is impressive. The MDC Stonybrook Reservation and George Wright Golf Courses are both within Hyde Park. There are also large vacant land tracts scattered along the Neponset River and the Penn Central (Southwest Corridor). The Readville yards of the Penn Central includes 60-100 acres of land which is no longer used by the railroad.

There is concern by residents that open and vacant areas should be protected and not be developed. In recent years, residents in the Gordon Avenue/Emmet Street area opposed development of townhouses on a 16-acre tract adjacent to the Stonybrook Reservation because the proposal eliminated a large open and natural area.

### Strategies

The City's strategy for retaining open and underutilized areas in Hyde Park depends heavily on use of zoning and land acquisition tools. Most areas which have come under development pressure in recent years, i.e. Barry's Quarry, Austin Street and Gordon Avenue have required City approvals by the Zoning Commission or Board of Appeals because variances from existing zoning were needed. This has meant that the City's discretionary powers can be useful to protect the district's open areas.

City acquisition of open land is more difficult as it requires use of scarce funds to purchase expensive real estate. In some cases, however, this strategy should be recommended. For example, in areas where there is inadequate park land available to residents or where a specific parcel has unusual natural features such as marsh, ledge or scenic views, acquisition should be considered.





# 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

## HYDE PARK



### III. 1975 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1975 public investment program concentrates in four areas: housing, commercial area revitalization, capital improvements and neighborhood services.

#### A. HOUSING

The Housing Improvement Program (HIP) which provides incentives for rehabilitation of 1-6 unit owner-occupied dwellings, will be available throughout Hyde Park and has funds (\$150,000) for approximately 200 buildings. An HIP site office has been opened in the Hyde Park Municipal Building for administration of this program.

#### B. COMMERCIAL AREA REVITALIZATION

Over the next three years the City will concentrate funds on the revitalization of Cleary Square. This year's funds are being used for: (1) new sodium vapor lighting (\$70,500) along River Street and Hyde Park Avenue, and (2) site acquisition, demolition and development of Top Dollar building site and adjacent land for an off-street parking lot (\$315,000).

#### C. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The City's Capital improvement program for Hyde Park includes the following projects:

<u>Project</u>	<u>1975 Funding Allocation</u>
Alterations & Repairs-District 5 Police Station	\$ 490,000
Alteration & Repairs-Municipal Building	330,000
Hyde Park High School-Renovation (in planning)	8,000,000
Ross Playground (playfield)	250,000
Readville Playground (reconstruct playfields)	65,000
Amatucci Playground (construction of children's play area)	174,000
Ohrenberger School (tennis courts)	40,000
Lighting for Fairmount Public Housing Project	45,000
City's share for engineering and design of traffic signal improvements at American Legion Highway & Hyde Park Avenue	4,500 (design only)

The City has also recommended to the State that Chapter 90 funds be used for street reconstruction of West Street from Hyde Park Avenue to Poplar Street.

D. NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

The rehabilitation of a portion of the Roslindale Municipal Building for use as a neighborhood health center will help to improve health delivery in the entire southwestern area of Boston, including Hyde Park.

#### IV. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

It is important that public funds be used in future years to maintain the viability of Hyde Park's residential neighborhoods. The areas for future public investment are outlined in a general manner below. These areas should be discussed and refined at neighborhood meetings during the coming months and specific recommendations made. The citizen participation process is critical to the selection of specific projects to be funded.

Future investment for housing should include: (1) the continuation of the Housing Improvement Program to provide for the rehabilitation of approximately 200 housing units annually; (2) modernization funds to improve the Fairmount Housing Project; (3) construction of at least 100-200 units of elderly housing in 1976 to respond to Hyde Park's elderly housing needs; and (4) housing investment in the Southwest Corridor to provide for improvement of existing houses on Summer Street and for new elderly housing construction.

Future capital investment needs include sewer and water line improvements in Hyde Park's older neighborhoods, new street lighting, and upgrading of existing facilities such as the Readville Fire Station and George White Health Center.

A storefront rehabilitation program should be established and presented to Cleary Square merchants. This program could provide a rebate to business owners for repairing storefronts and should be extended to the approximately 80 stores in the Square. To reduce crime and vandalism, funds should be continued and expanded for a footpatrolman in the Square. Finally, the Board of Trade should consider the construction of an off-street parking facility on vacant land at the intersection of Central Avenue and Winthrop Street.

The City's Conservation Commission should consider acquisition of portions of Barry's Quarry and vacant areas adjacent to MDC's Stonybrook Reservation and George Wright Golf Courses because of the outstanding natural quality and topography of this land.



# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Residential Stability	Improve quality of existing housing stock	HIP-\$150,000 Lights for Fairmount Housing Project-\$45,000	Continuation of HIP program -200 units annually Utilize Section 8 funds Continue to modernize Fairmount Housing project
	Provide for the needs of the elderly including new housing areas	Roslindale Health Center (to serve Southwest Boston areas) - \$65,500	100-200 units of low/moderate income elderly housing in 1976
Reuse of Southwest Corridor land	Reuse vacant land for housing and community related uses		Development of 2-acre Southwest Corridor-Summer Street site for elderly housing
	Resale of structures to owner-occupants		HIP & Section 8 funds to renovate houses; deeper subsidy may also be needed
Need for Capital Improvements	Use Capital expenditures to strengthen neighborhoods	Alterations & repairs-District 5 Police station \$490,000 Alterations & repairs-Municipal Building \$330,000 Hyde Park High School Renovation (in planning) Ross Playground \$250,000 Readville Plgd. 65,000 Amatucci Plgd. 174,000 Ohrenberger School 40,000 (tennis courts) City's Share for engineering & design of traffic signal improvements at American Legion Highway and Hyde Park Avenue (design only)	Sewer and Water line improvements in Sunnyside, Fairmount and Readville areas; New street lighting; street reconstruction; and upgrading of Readville Fire Station and George White Health Center

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Commercial Revitalization of Cleary Square	Improve traffic circulation in Square	Site acquisition, demolition and development of Top Dollar site to be used with adjacent land for off-street parking area -	Merchants off-street parking area on vacant land at the corner of Winthrop Street and Central Avenue
	Provide off-street parking facilities		
	Stimulate & attract new businesses	Encourage storefront rehabilitation	Provide storefront rehab program to 20% of merchants in 1976
	Maintain foot patrolman in Square to enforce parking restriction & to improve security		
	Use of City's zoning powers	Foot patrolman is now assigned to Cleary Square	Continue and expand foot patrolman in Cleary Square
Retention of open & underutilized vacant land			
Retention of open & underutilized vacant land	Acquire land in areas with open space needs or where unique topography exists		Vacant portions of Barry's Quarry and areas adjacent to Stonybrook Reservation & George Wright Golf Course should be considered for acquisition





M3/B16  
RA  
75/7  
pt. 8

WORKING DRAFT  
FOR  
COMMUNITY REVIEW

## JAMAICA PLAIN

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June 1975



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.	SHORT HISTORY	[3]
B.	EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	[5]
	Egleston Square/Stoneybrook	
	Hyde Square	
	Jamaica Central/Jamaica South	
	Jamaica Hills/Jamaica Pond	
	Woodbourne	
C.	PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT	[9]
D.	PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT	[9]
E.	ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	[9]
	1. Residential Instability	
	2. Commercial Center Decline	
	3. Transportation Problems	
	4. Institutional and Industrial Expansion	
F.	1975 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[15]
G.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS	[14]





## INTRODUCTION

This report, prepared by the Jamaica Plain District Planner, is a draft document meant to structure discussion among residents and City representatives on planning strategies and investment needs.

The report does a number of things:

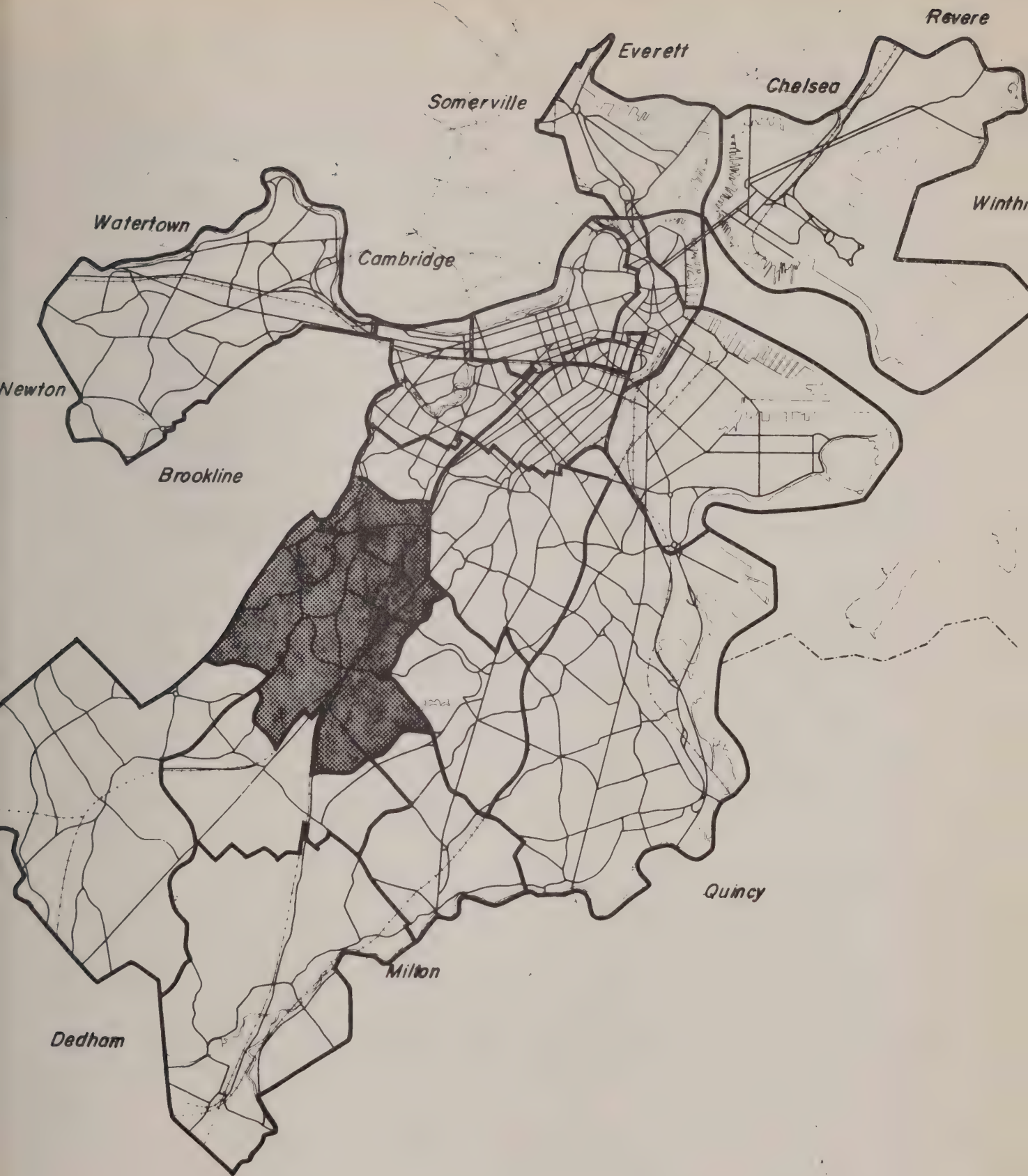
First, it establishes a base of population, income and housing data as well as a listing and analysis of recent past Public and Private Investment in Jamaica Plain. This information can be used by the District Planner and others who are involved in the planning process, neighborhood residents, Little City Hall Staff and other City agencies and departments.

Second, it offers an analysis of the major physical planning issues which confront the community along with recommended strategies. These strategies should form the basis of discussion for community residents for the CDRS and Capital Improvement participation processes as well as for involvement in issues which are not addressed by City expenditures such as rezoning, private development or wholly funded State Programs.

Third, the report recognizes that strategies are not self-fulfilling and makes recommendations for investments, both public and private, which are necessary to help carry through the recommended strategies.







JAMAICA PLAIN





## A. SHORT HISTORY

Historically, Jamaica Plain has never been a clearly defined area. It was originally part of the town of Roxbury and when West Roxbury was declared a separate community in 1851 no distinct boundary existed between Jamaica Plain and other portions of West Roxbury.

In the 17th century, West Roxbury was sparsely settled and was an area of fertile farmland which supplied much of Boston's fruit and produce. The earliest streets determined the first settlements and still define neighborhoods today in Jamaica Plain.

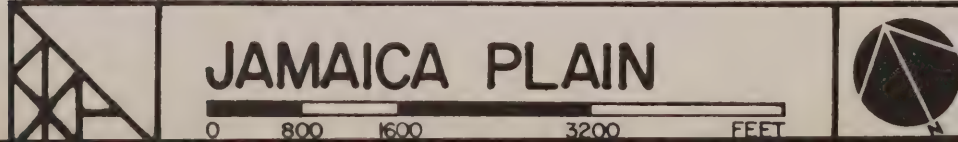
Two major factors influenced the early development of Jamaica Plain: a new water supply and transit extensions. In 1795, the Jamaica Plain Aqueduct Company was formed. Its water system, which extended from Jamaica Pond to Fort Hill, was a major source of water supply to Boston until 1845. This water supply attracted industry to Jamaica Plain and tanneries and breweries grew up in the band from Roxbury Crossing to Forest Hills. In 1834, the Boston and Providence railroad was constructed along Washington Street. The railroad brought commuters to Jamaica Plain and the area was no longer to be a community of farmers and wealthy residents. The new commuters built Greek Revival, Italianate and mansard houses, many of which still remain.

The last half of the 19th century brought many physical changes to Jamaica Plain. In the 1870's the street car tracks were extended from Roxbury into West Roxbury along Washington Street and Centre Street. This improved access was a stimulant to construction of middle class residential areas throughout Jamaica Plain. Most of the old estates were subdivided and cross roads were built. The area which was most intensively developed at this time was central Jamaica Plain bounded by Centre Street, Green Street and the railroad. Most of the houses built were single or two - family, detached wooden structures, although three deckers were constructed near the borders of Roxbury and the manufacturing district.

While the district has some of the finest housing in the City in the Pond and Moss Hill sections, the areas closest to the Southwest Corridor have serious housing problems with moderate abandonment along the immediate right-of-way. Egleston Square and the Hyde Square areas have been particularly hard hit with both commercial and residential deterioration, despite the Code Enforcement efforts of the early 1970's to stabilize these areas. In addition, the whole band of central Jamaica Plain has been recently hard hit by bank lending practices which have placed a fairly tight lid on mortgages and housing rehabilitation money to this area.











## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS BY SUB-AREA

Information on population, income and housing in this report is derived from the 1960 and 1970 U.S. Census. The data for Jamaica Plain is available on a sub-area basis, and for purposes of analysis, eight sub areas have been designated as shown on the sub-areas map. These sub-areas conform in general to local neighborhood association boundaries, but vary in some instances for purposes of data analysis. The 1960 Census data is not available for the designated sub-areas and comparisons between 1960 and 1970 are shown only for the district as a whole.

### 1. Egleston Square/Stoneybrook

The Egleston Square/Stoneybrook area is a residential area of approximately 10,800 people , but also contains the major portion of Jamaica Plain's industrial uses. The area is characterized by two and three family frame dwellings, with various other housing types (mainly single family) interspersed throughout. The majority of Egleston Square's population is white, with a stable black population and a small but growing number of Spanish speaking people, many of whom are newly arrived Latin Americans. Stoneybrook's population is less heterogeneous, with the white population accounting for nearly 95% of the total. Under the federally funded Community Improvement Program (CIP), many residential units in Egleston Square have been rehabilitated and needed street improvements completed; the Stoneybrook neighborhood, however, has not had the benefits of this program. The Washington Street "El" and sections of the industrial district are a blighting influence on these neighborhoods. Additionally, the long-term benefits of the CIP program and Egleston Square/Stoneybrook's residential stability depend to a great extent on the local banks' willingness to write mortgages and home improvement loans in the area.

### 2. Hyde Square

Hyde Square is a residential area of approximately 9800 people and is characterized by a predominance of multi-family dwellings. This area (which includes the Bromley Heath public housing project) is experiencing an influx of new upwardly mobile Greek and Spanish-speaking (especially Cuban) residents. At the same time, the negative influence of the Bromley Heath project and the Southwest Corridor threaten the potential upgrading process.

Hyde Square not only has the highest population density of all the district's neighborhoods, but approximately 38% of total occupied units are overcrowded (containing 1.01 persons or greater per room), a substantial portion of which are in the Bromley Heath project (one of the City's largest developments, housing some 3,670 persons in 1970). Housing closest to the



Pond is generally in good condition and housing closest to Bromley Heath is in fair to poor condition. Based on a 1969 BRA windshield survey, only 40% of the housing units in census tract 812 (which includes the Bromley Heath project) were in good condition compared to approximately 60% in this same area in 1962.

Hyde Square contains approximately 35 retail stores, including an A&P supermarket adjacent to the Bromley Heath project. Until recently, almost 25% of the stores were vacant. The present near complete occupancy (including many stores with specialty goods for the Spanish speaking population) indicates some renewed economic vitality in this area.

### 3. Jamaica Central/Jamaica South

Jamaica Central/Jamaica South is a residential area of approximately 13,500 people and is characterized by one and two family frame dwellings with various other housing types (particularly three deckers) interspersed throughout. Under the City's Community Improvement Program (CIP), many residential units have been rehabilitated and needed street improvements completed. Based on an exterior building condition survey completed in the summer of 1974 by the Jamaica Plain Little City Hall, almost 85% of the total residential structures were in good condition, with 6-8% in fair condition and 6-8% in poor condition. The blighting presence of the land cleared for the Southwest Corridor (the eastern boundary of Jamaica Central/Jamaica South) has threatened residential stability, and it is along the corridor where the majority of housing in fair to poor condition is located. As in the Egleston Square/Stoneybrook area, the long-term benefits of the CIP program and Jamaica Central/Jamaica South's residential stability depend to a great extent upon the local banks willingness to write mortgages and home improvement loans in the area.

### 4. Jamaica Hills/Jamaica Pond

Jamaica Hills/Jamaica Pond is a residential area of approximately 6200 people and is characterized by a large concentration of single family homes on moderate to large size lots and a high percentage of home ownership. The Jamaica Hills area differs from the Pond area in that the Jamaica Hills residential density is lower and its median family income and percentage of home ownership is higher. Additionally, nearly all families earning less than \$5000 per year are located in the Jamaica Pond area. In recent years, the "Pond" section has been under strong pressure to convert many of its older houses to multi-family units; there have also been conversions to nursing homes and student quarters. Additional development pressure in the area has come from institutional expansion and condominium developments (i.e., the Cabot Estate and the proposed Hellenic College housing).

### 5. Woodbourne

Woodbourne is a residential area of approximately 6000 people and is characterized by a mix of housing types with about half of the units in one and two family dwellings. The population





is almost 100% white and has a median family income of \$9130-\$10,020. The neighborhood is blighted by vacant parcels in the Southwest Corridor and by the presence of vacant and abandoned buildings, particularly the boarded structures along Hyde Park Avenue.





COMPARATIVE STATISTICS - JAMAICA PLAIN

1960/1970 U.S. CENSUS DATA

	Hyde Square	Jamaica Pond	Jamaica Hills	Jamaica South	Jamaica Central	Egleston Square	Stoneybrook	Woodbourne	District	City
<u>Population</u>										
Total 1970 change from '60	9760 -	2960 -	3245 -	4187 -	9303 -	7763 -	3003 -	5999 -	46,220 -12.4%	641,071 -8%
Total Black 1970 change from '60	2019 -	0 -	22 -	107 -	173 -	1785 -	155 -	0 -	5,261 +216%	104,206 +65%
65 years and over 1970 change from '60	1043 -	795 -	463 -	647 -	1706 -	1172 -	350 -	819 -	6,995 +3%	81,718 -5%
<u>Income</u>										
Median Family Income (1970)	4099-12653	9760-12653		7186-12653		7549	7186-12653	9130-12653	-	9000-11,999
% Families under \$5000 (1970)	35%	11%		20%		26%	20%	18%	20%	22%
<u>Housing</u>										
Total Dwelling unit (1970)	3511	1030	843	1522	3145	2568	1032	1972	15,623	232,856
Owner Occupied (1970) change from '60	14%	38%	85%	25%	28%	23%	17%	40%	28%	27%
Units needing fix- up in excess of \$1000	1960	11	12	117	222	1133	314	149	2918	67,102
Mobility of residents: people in same house for 5 years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	53%	50%



### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Capital expenditures in Jamaica Plain have increased substantially from 1968 to 1974 as compared to previous periods. From 1968 to 1974 over \$17,800,000 was expended. The major thrust of the capital investment has been toward strengthening neighborhoods through the construction or renovation of community facilities, parks and streets. The City spent over \$16 million for the construction of three new schools: the Hennigan, the Aggassiz and the Curley. The City also spent over \$400,000 for the renovation of playground facilities such as those at Cornwall, Murphy, Parkman and Jefferson playgrounds. At the same time, there were over 6 miles of street reconstruction, over a mile of sidewalk reconstruction and over three miles of sewer and water work completed.

Public effort in housing has been directed in three areas of activity: conservation, leased housing and rehabilitation. The old Holtzer-Cabot factory building on Amory Street was converted by the Boston Housing Authority to 223 units of low income elderly housing, demonstrating the ability to reclaim industrial property for residential use. Under the leased housing program, the Boston Housing Authority has been able to provide low and moderate income families and individuals with attractive housing. Many residential units were rehabilitated under FHA programs and the MHFA completed a superior rehabilitation project at Cleaves Court. Since September 1973 the Mayor's Housing Improvement Program has encouraged the private rehabilitation of over 81 homes in the district. The program has been instrumental in the preservation of the housing stock by offering tax rebates to homeowners who complete certain home improvements.

### D. PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

A review of building permits for construction activity in excess of \$10,000 shows that there has been substantial residential, commercial and institutional investment in Jamaica Plain from 1968 to the present. A great proportion of the total private investment is attributed to the new Faulkner Hospital; however, other institutional investment has occurred and has been evenly distributed throughout Jamaica Plain. Substantial residential construction and rehabilitation has occurred, with the majority of activity taking place in the Jamaica Hills/Jamaica Pond area. Commercial investment has been concentrated along Centre Street and has been evenly divided between new structures and rehabilitation or alteration of existing buildings.

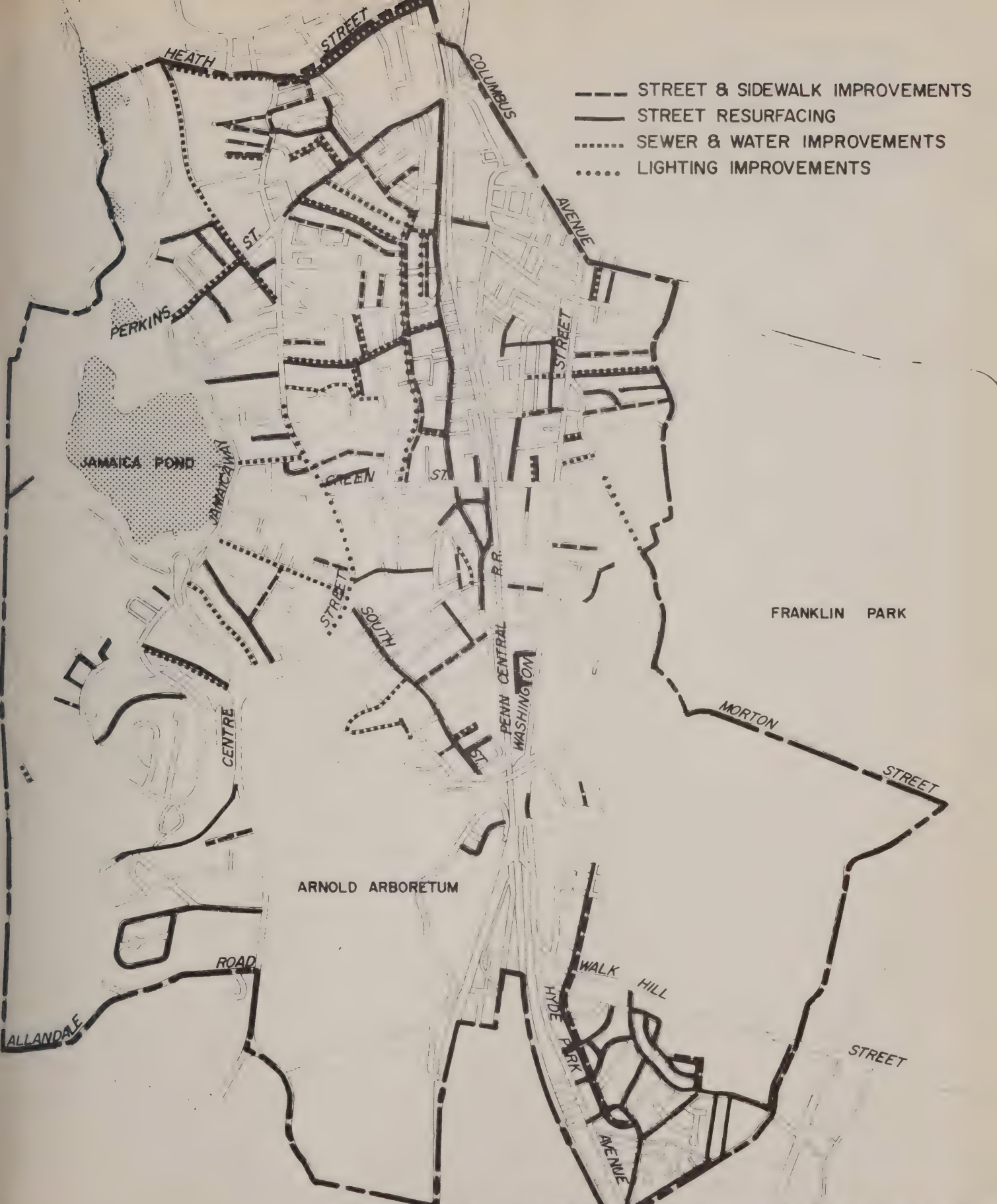
### E. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

#### 1. Residential Instability

a. Issue Jamaica Plain has traditionally been a family residential area with strong neighborhood ties. At present, however, there are many inter-related factors which, in various combinations, contribute to the deterioration of the housing stock and threaten the stability of many residential neighborhoods in Jamaica Plain.







PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1968-74

JAMAICA PLAIN

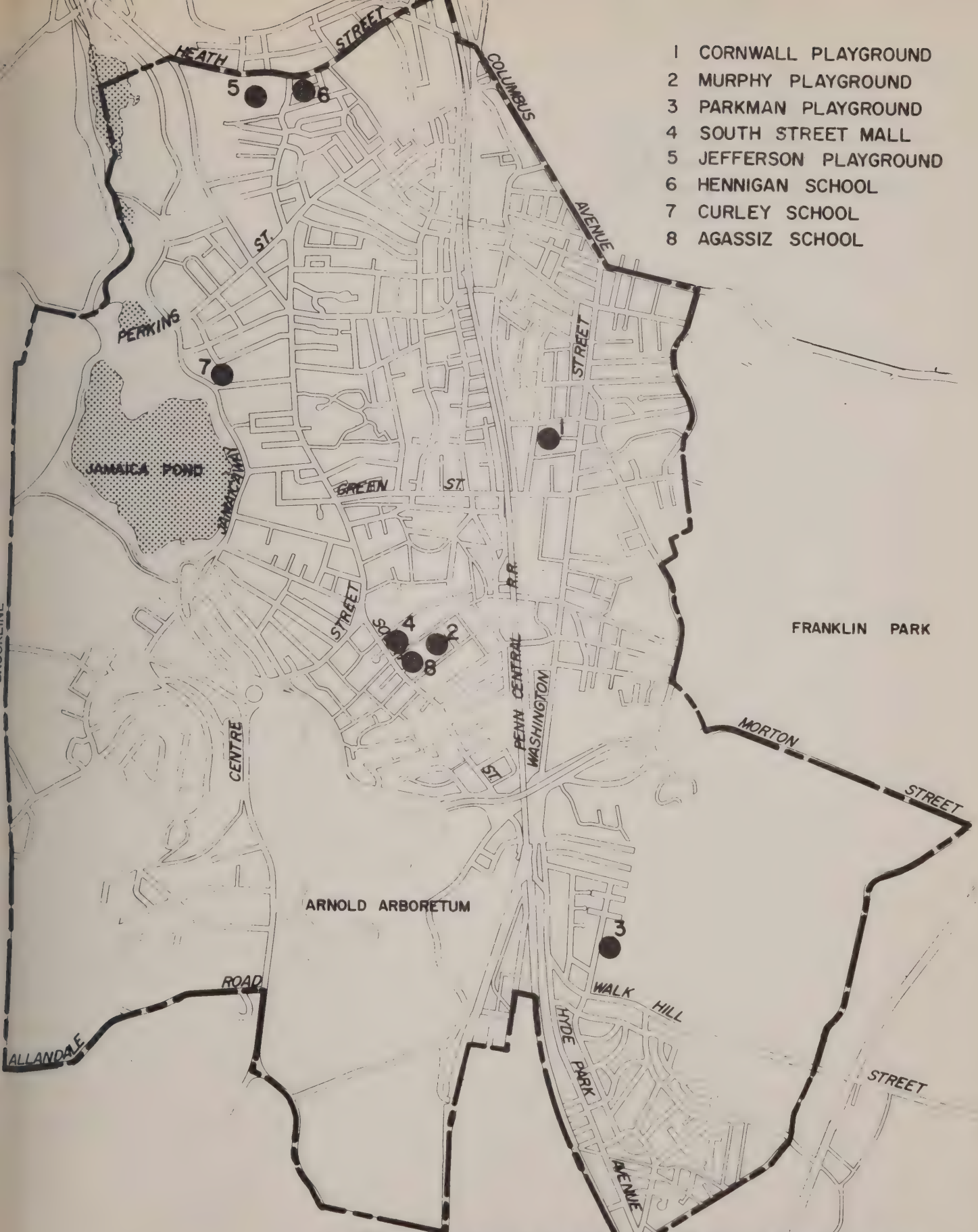
0 800 1600 3200 FEET







- 1 CORNWALL PLAYGROUND
- 2 MURPHY PLAYGROUND
- 3 PARKMAN PLAYGROUND
- 4 SOUTH STREET MALL
- 5 JEFFERSON PLAYGROUND
- 6 HENNIGAN SCHOOL
- 7 CURLEY SCHOOL
- 8 AGASSIZ SCHOOL

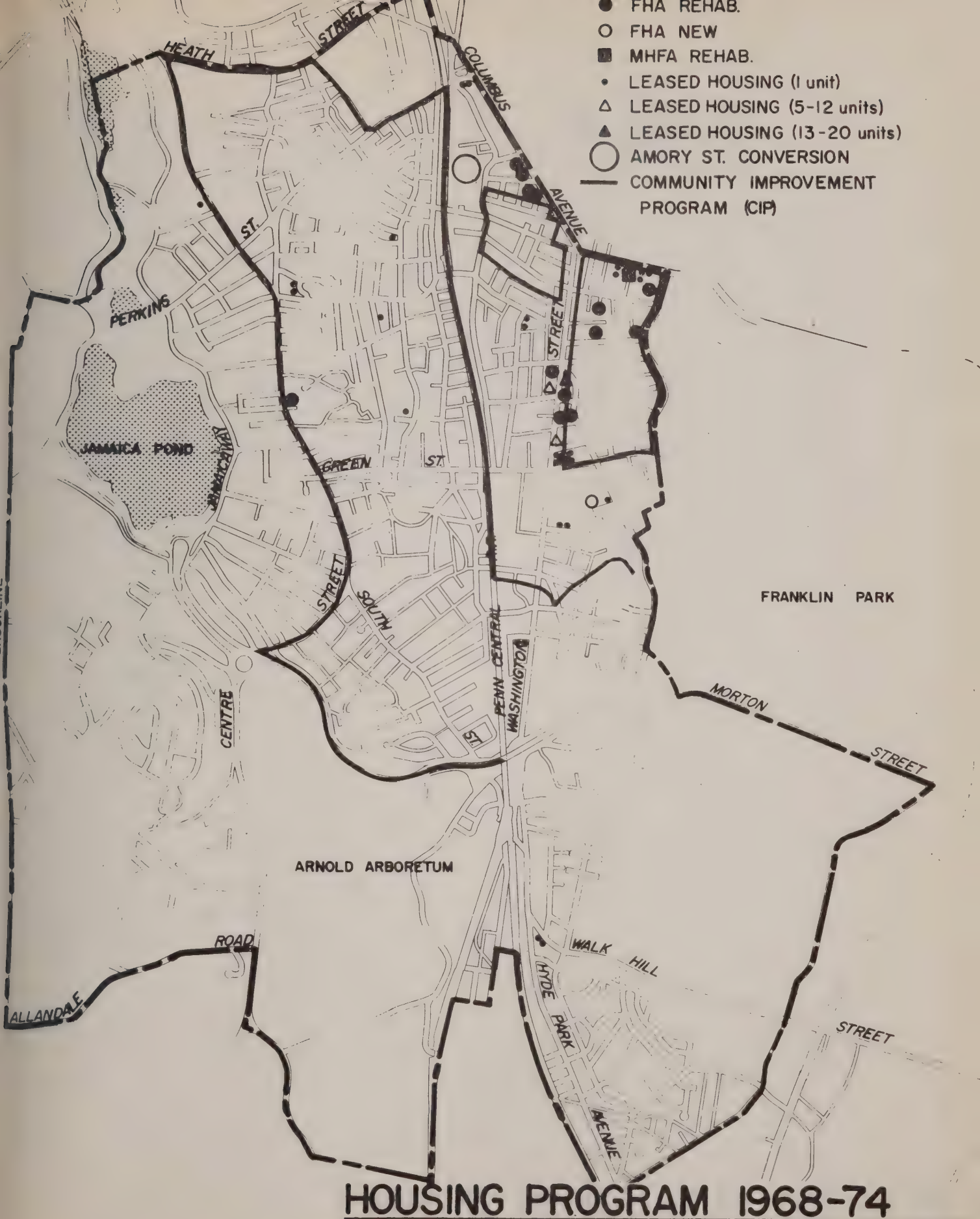


PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74

JAMAICA PLAIN

0 800 1600 3200 FEET





**JAMAICA PLAIN**

0 800 1600 3200 FEET













These factors are:

- 1) Income Cost Squeeze: Operating costs are going up faster than income and, in combination with high taxes and modest rents, restrict the funds available for maintenance or fix-up.
  - 2) Restrictions On Availability Of Mortgages and Home Improvement Loans: In portions of Jamaica Plain, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for some homeowners or potential buyers to obtain a mortgage or home improvement loan. When loans are made, they often involve higher interest rates, higher down payments and shorter maturities than those made in suburban areas. Ironically, speculators or absentee owners can often obtain mortgages more easily because of collateral, established credit or higher offers for the property.
  - 3) Fear Of Crime and Social Change: Fear of crime is a major factor which has kept families from moving into or encouraged families to move out of sections of Jamaica Plain. Social change has occurred in some sections of Jamaica Plain and the beliefs associated with socioeconomic change, whether true or not, spur many middle class families to leave the area. Typically, they go through a process of disinvestment well in advance of the new lower income renters/owners and the new groups inherit a housing stock which often is too costly for them to adequately maintain.
  - 4) Presence Of Blighting Influences: The presence of blighting influences such as the Washington Street "EL," abandoned housing, dirty vacant lots, deteriorated public housing, objectionable industrial areas and the cleared tracts of land in the Southwest Corridor often discourage investment and lead to further decline in quality of the district.
  - 5) Uncertainties As To Governmental Actions: The uncertainty of plans for development of the Southwest Corridor has led to hesitations by some in making home improvements and to fears of undesirable change.
- b. Strategy The quality of residential neighborhoods can be improved through implementation of a coordinated program of credit availability, rehabilitation incentives, neighborhood improvement and capital investment as follows:
- 1) Credit Availability : Restoring the general availability of credit in Jamaica Plain is perhaps the most important element in the revitalization strategy. Lending institutions must be encouraged to provide mortgages and home improvement loans to families in Jamaica Plain and the city and community groups



should work in concert to accomplish this. Disclosure by banks of geographic lending patterns, brought about either through legislation or administrative regulation, is an integral part of this strategy and efforts such as those of the Jamaica Plain Banking & Mortgage Committee should be supported. Additionally, support is needed for state legislative action to create an agency with a mortgage guarantee fund in order to help insure the availability of mortgages in Jamaica Plain. The fund would cover any losses a bank might incur if it had to foreclose on a mortgage.

- 2) Rehabilitation Incentives: Continuation of the Housing Improvement Program (consisting of counseling, technical assistance and a 20% cash rebate) will encourage housing fix-up. Rental subsidies such as those available under federally sponsored section 8 or state-sponsored section 707 would enable property owners in those sections of Jamaica Plain which need more incentives to rehabilitate to do so by assuring an adequate cash flow to cover the cost of rehabilitation.
- 3) Neighborhood Improvement: Enforcement of occupancy regulations, code enforcement for non-owner occupied structures, securing or clearance of abandoned buildings, restoration and improvement of vacant lots and rehabilitation of community service buildings and public housing will help to upgrade residential neighborhoods and generate confidence in the future of the area. The construction of new housing is a vital component in providing for the needs of the district. Many sites in the Jamaica Hills/Jamaica Pond area, as well as parcels along the Southwest Corridor, are well suited for low rise housing. Additionally, Jamaica Plain has a particular need for construction of subsidized housing for the elderly.
- 4) Capital Investment: Reconstruction of streets and sidewalks, improvement of street lighting and capital investment in parks, schools and other public facilities demonstrate continued confidence by the city and, when coupled with other activity such as MHIP, can have a significant positive impact on an area.

## 2. Commercial Center Decline

The decline of neighborhood shopping centers in Jamaica Plain is not unusual in the era of "one stop" shopping at large outlying chain stores. The convenience of ample free parking at chain stores and variety of merchandise available in regional shopping centers make these facilities more attractive to those with automobiles. The need for neighborhood shopping areas, especially for the elderly or those without automobiles, requires that neighborhood commercial centers be upgraded and a balance of stores be provided offering the basic goods and services.





A central issue is how to make the neighborhood shopping centers competitive with outlying stores so that residents will utilize the shops and services close at hand.

Strategy: Both public and private efforts are required to enable neighborhood shopping centers to compete with larger suburban centers. Additional street lighting, street furniture and off street parking lots are needed to create a more attractive and convenient shopping environment on Centre Street and in Egleston Square, Hyde Square and Forest Hills. Continuation of police foot patrols is a major factor in the commercial center's image and will encourage shoppers to use neighborhood facilities. The City should assist businessmen's associations in setting up workshops, attracting new businesses and providing for the reuse of key parcels. These public actions and improvements, in concert with the new program providing incentives for storefront rehabilitation, will provide for a significant upgrading of Jamaica Plain's neighborhood commercial centers.

### 3. Transportation Problems

- a. Issue: Transportation problems in Jamaica Plain center around 3 major issues: street network deficiencies, traffic congestion and transportation. Heavy traffic and deferred maintenance have left many of Jamaica Plain's major roadways in poor condition. Congestion is present on major through routes, especially during rush hours, and is intensified by illegal parking and insufficient traffic control. Continuation and improvement of the MBTA's Arborway streetcar service and the design and impact of the proposed Arborway Bus Garage are issues of importance in the area of public transportation. However, the central public transportation issue in Jamaica Plain is the uncertainty associated with the Southwest Corridor Development Plans. Many Southwest Corridor issues remain to be resolved; these include: the decision to build or not to build an arterial street, development and/or reuse of Southwest Corridor land and related parcels, relocation of the Orange Line, location and layout of new stations and their attendant traffic generation and parking needs and demolition of the Washington Street "EL".

Strategy: The physical condition of the streets requires resurfacing or reconstruction and provision of new street lighting. The problem of traffic congestion requires a multi-faceted approach. A study of the existing circulation plan is needed and the function of certain congested streets should be reviewed and alternative circulation proposals considered. In particular, the proposal for the Southwest Corridor arterial street should be examined in detail with regards to its potential impact on the adjacent neighborhoods and to its capacity to resolve circulation problems and congestion on roadways not designed for through traffic. Additional roadway improvements





are needed for the gas station island at Forest Hills and on Centre Street. Traffic signalization is necessary on some major streets as well as troublesome intersections on secondary roads. Stepped-up ticketing and towing of illegally parked cars, especially double parkers, is a necessary step in the resolution of Jamaica Plain's traffic congestion, especially on Centre and Washington Streets.

The City needs to obtain accurate and complete data on the operations of the Arborway Line and work with the community to evaluate alternatives and make an informed choice within the options. Reworking of the Arborway Bus Garage plans must be accomplished to ensure its compatibility with area wide planning considerations. Of extreme importance is the need to review all consultants' studies on Southwest Corridor issues to ensure the compatibility of plans with nearby neighborhoods. Additionally, the BRA must prepare studies on key areas and issues within the Southwest Corridor and work with interested community groups to ensure informed decisions.

#### 4. Institutional And Industrial Expansion/Encroachment

- a. Issue: The Egleston Square/Stoneybrook area contains the majority of the industrial land in Jamaica Plain but it is not efficiently used and the industrial area is deteriorating because of obsolescence brought about by changing technology and poor access. An issue of increasing importance to the city is how to ensure viability of industrial firms and attract new light industry without adversely affecting the quality of life in adjacent residential neighborhoods.

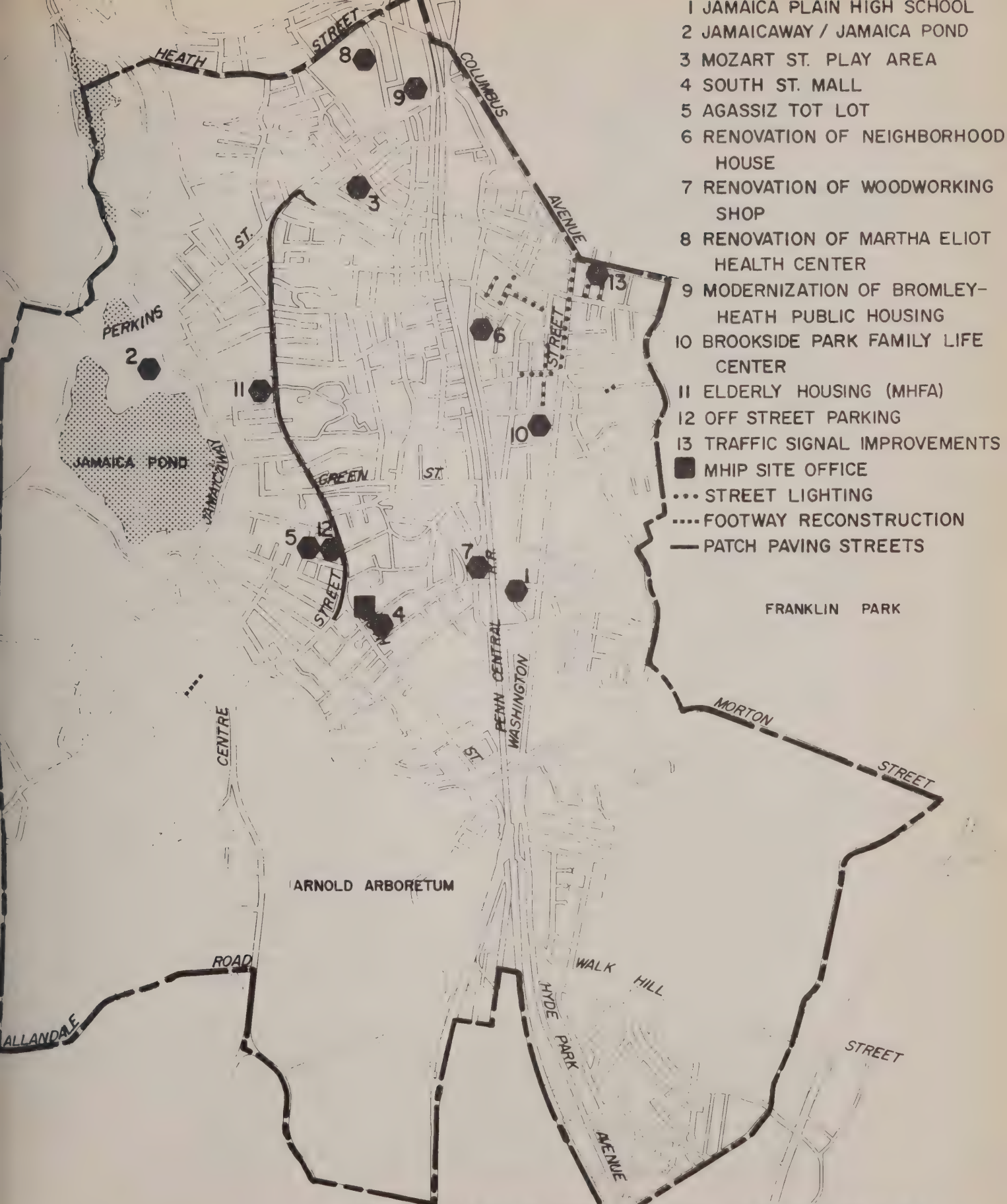
Institutional expansion and encroachment is an issue of importance in Jamaica Plain, especially in the Jamaica Pond/Jamaica Hills area where institutions have continued to expand and locate in a haphazard pattern by means of individual variances and conversion of residential properties.

- b. Strategy: A study of the industrial areas in Jamaica Plain should be prepared and proposals for rezoning (if applicable) set forth, which, if adopted, should encourage intensified industrial activity within designated zones. Railroad and street improvements to provide better access and private modernization efforts would contribute to the viability of the existing industrial firms and help to attract new firms. A study of institutional locations, needs and problems should be prepared so it can be utilized as a guide to action in determining appropriate locations or expansion needs of institutions and in granting or denying individual variances.

#### F. 1975 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1975 Program focuses on three main areas: housing, neighborhood business districts and capital improvements. The Housing Improvement Program, which provides incentives for rehabilitation of 1-6 unit owner occupied dwellings, will be available throughout the entire district and has funds for approximately 240 buildings.





## 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

JAMAICA PLAIN

0 800 1600 3200 FEET







The elderly housing development at 545 Centre Street (an MHFA project) will provide 147 units of housing. There are also funds for demolition or securing of abandoned buildings and for restoration and improvement of vacant lots. Additionally, nearly half a million dollars has been allocated for the modernization of the Bromley-Heath public housing project.

The effort for commercial center revitalization includes the reconstruction of an off-street parking lot on Centre Street and the installation of new street lighting and the design of traffic signals for Egleston Square.

The City's capital investment in the district includes the construction of a new Jamaica Plain High School, a new police station, and the Brookside Family Life Center, renovation of three community service buildings (the Neighborhood House, the Martha Eliot Health Center and the woodworking shop at 50 Call St.) and the development of park and playground facilities at Daisey Field, Jamaica Pond, South Street, Mozart Street and the Agassiz Tot Lot. In addition, there is money allocated for street lighting and street and sidewalk reconstruction.

#### G. Future Public Investment Needs

It is important that additional public funds be expended in Jamaica Plain in future years in order to maintain the viability of its residential neighborhoods. The areas for future public investment are outlined below in a general manner; they should be discussed and refined at meetings in the neighborhoods during the coming months and more specific recommendations made. The citizen participation process is critical to the delineation of specific projects to be funded in future years.

Future investment needs for housing in Jamaica Plain include continuation of the housing improvement program to provide for the rehabilitation of approximately 250 units per year. There is also a need to provide deeper subsidies to encourage rehabilitation where the HIP is not sufficient. Further funding is needed for securing/clearance of additional abandoned buildings and restoration/ improvement of additional vacant lots. Additionally, there exists a need for an abandoned building rehabilitation program and funding to support that program. Major public investment is needed to rehabilitate and maintain the buildings and grounds of public housing projects, particularly those in the Bromley-Heath project.

Future capital investment needs include a new district fire station, provision of new parks and playfields, improvement of existing parks and playgrounds, street and sidewalk reconstruction, tree planting, new residential street lighting and commercial area street lighting in Hyde Square and Forest Hills. Street furniture, such as benches and trash containers, is needed in Egleston Square, Hyde Square, Forest Hills and Centre Street, as well as funding for a storefront rehabilitation program in





these four commercial areas. City funds are also necessary to continue and expand projects which are deemed to be successful (such as the police foot patrol program) and to provide staff for the planning and implementation of new programs (such as commercial area revitalization).



Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
<p>I. QUALITY OF RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS</p> <p>A. Restrictions on mortgage and home improvement loan availability</p>	<p>Increase and stabilize neighborhood mortgage and home improvement assistance</p>		
	<p>Preservation of stock HIP</p>	<p>HIP - \$300,000</p>	<p>HIP - 250 units/year</p>
<p>B. Presence of blighting influences</p>	<p>Securing or clearance of abandoned buildings</p>	<p>Clearance of abandoned, unsafe and dangerous buildings - \$150,000</p> <p>Securing of vacant buildings for future rehabilitation - \$37,500</p>	<p>Securing/clearance of additional abandoned buildings</p>
	<p>Rehabilitation of secured buildings</p>		<p>Funding for abandoned building rehab program</p>
	<p>Restoration and improvement of vacant lots in residential areas</p>	<p>Restoration of vacant lots - \$75,000</p>	<p>Restoration/improvement of additional vacant lots</p>
	<p>Hold sizeable city-owned vacant areas for future sale or development</p>		





Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
C. Need for capital improvements	Rehabilitation of community service buildings	Renovation of the Neighborhood House - \$130,000	
		Renovation of the wood-working shop on Call St. - \$10,000	
		Renovation of Martha Eliot Health Center - \$178,000	
	Rehabilitation of public housing	Modernization of Bromley-Heath public housing project - \$448,000	Modernization of additional public housing units
		Code enforcement	
	Capital expenditure to strengthen neighborhood	Jamaica Plain High School - \$21,000,000	
		District 13 Police Station \$1,100,000	
			New District Fire Station
		Daisey Field - \$225,000 Jamaica Pond - \$425,000 Mozart St. Play area - \$100,000 South St. Mall - \$209,334 Agassiz Tot Lot	Additional parks and playfields
		Brookside Park Family Life Center \$1,500,000	
		Sewer and water line improve-	





Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Need for new housing	Encourage private development	Centre St. Elderly Housing - \$4,540,000  Cabot Estate Condominiums 16,000,000	Hellenic College Site residential development
Illegal occupancy	Develop action program for resolution of cases		
Housing needs deeper than those addressed by MHIP	Develop program to address needs		Funding for housing program to be developed
II COMMERCIAL CENTER DECLINE	Maintain police foot patrols in commercial centers	Foot patrolmen on Centre St, Egleston Sq. and Forest Hills	Provide funding for continuation of foot patrolmen
	Improve lighting	Lighting in Egleston Sq. - \$120,000	Lighting in Hyde Sq. and Forest Hills
	Provide off street parking lots	Parking lot at Centre and Burroughs \$85,000	Off street parking in Egleston Sq. and Forest Hills Additional lot for Centre St.
	Reduce traffic congestion		Urban Systems projects



Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
	Stimulate/attract new business		
	Reuse key parcels (a) Centre St: Old Agassiz, Gino's lot (b) Egleston: Big Bear, theatre complex, city owned lots (c) Forest Hills: Hatoff's Fitzgerald site		Acquisition, demolition, site preparation
	Establish or strengthen businessesmen's associations (Hyde Sq., Forest Hills)		
	Develop plans for pedestrian improvements		Provide street furniture for Centre St, Egleston Sq., Forest Hills and Hyde Sq.
	Encourage storefront rehab		Funding for rebate program for Centre St, Egleston Sq, Forest Hills, Hyde Sq.
	Market study to direct revitalization efforts		





Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Program
III. Transportation Problems			
A. Street network deficiencies	Patch paving and reconstruction	Patch paving various streets. Reconstruction of South Street (State Funds)	Additional patch paving. Complete reconstruction of Centre St.
	Improve traffic signalization	Traffic signal improvement at Eggleston Square \$4500	Additional signal improvements new signals
	Street lighting improvements	Street lighting (various locations) \$100,000	New street lighting; improved street lighting.
B. Traffic congestion	Provide roadway improvements to relieve congestion		





Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
C. Continuation of Arborway Street car Service.	Ensure continuation of Arborway Street car service until the community and the City have had a chance to evaluate the alternatives and make a choice.		
D. Arborway Bus Garage	Ensure compatibility of design with area-wide planning and consideration of street-car service.		
E. Uncertainty of S. W. Corridor Development Plans	Review all consultants' studies to ensure desirability and compatibility with existing community.		
1. Relocation of Orange Line			
2. Arterial street-build or no build			
3. Land development and reuse	Prepare studies on key areas.		
4. Demolition of Washington St. EL			
5. Location and layout of stations			
6. Traffic generation and parking			



FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issues	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
IV. Institutional and Industrial expansion/encroachment	Prepare study of institutional/ industrial location needs, problems etc. as a guide to action		
	Control individual variances granted or denied		





M3/B16  
RA  
75/7  
pt. 9

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS  
DEPARTMENT  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

WORKING DRAFT  
FOR  
COMMUNITY REVIEW

MATTAPAN

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June, 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.	SHORT HISTORY	[3]
B.	EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	[3]
	Wellington Hill	
	Western Mattapan	
	Eastern Mattapan	[7]
C.	PAST PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT	[11]
D.	ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	
	1. Housing Abandonment and Neighborhood Stabilization	
	2. Blue Hill Avenue Revitalization	
E.	1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[15]
F.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS	[17]
G.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS AND PROPOSED PLANNING PROGRAM	[18]



## INTRODUCTION

This report prepared by the Mattapan District Planner is a draft document meant to form the basis for discussion among residents and City representatives on planning strategies and investment needs.

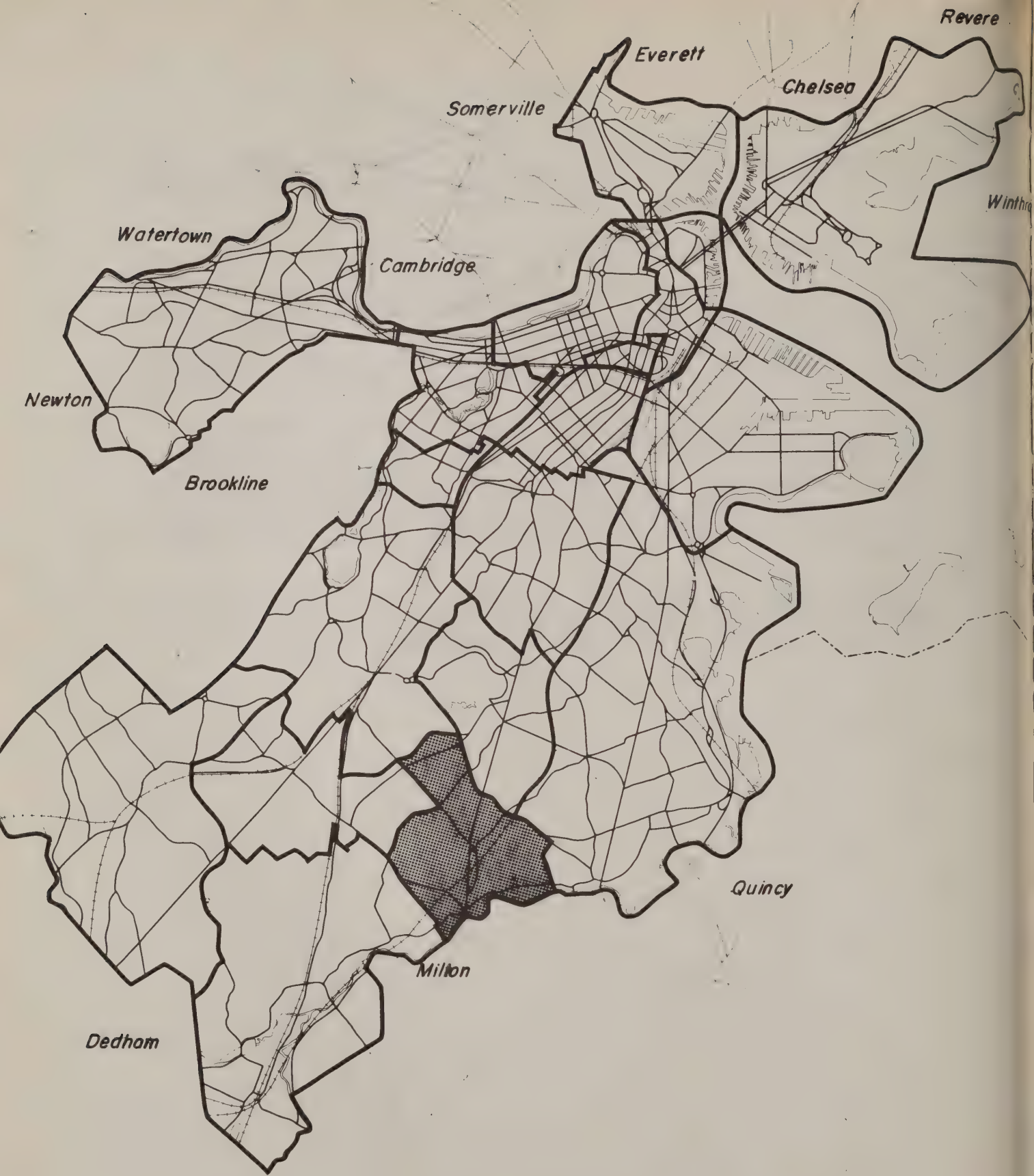
The report does a number of things:

First, it establishes a base of population, income and housing data as well as a listing and analysis of recent past Public and Private Investment in the Mattapan Area. This information can be used by the District Planner and others who are involved in the planning process, neighborhood residents, Little City Hall Staff and other City agencies and departments.

Second, it offers an analysis of the major issues which confront the community along with recommended strategies. These strategies should form the basis of discussion for community residents for the Community Development Block Grant and Capital Improvement participation process as well as for involvement in issues which are not addressed by City expenditures, such as rezoning, private development, or wholly funded State Programs.

Third, the report recognizes that strategies are not self-fulfilling and makes recommendations for investments, both public and private, which are necessary to help carry through the recommended strategies.





MATTAPAN



## A. SHORT HISTORY

Mattapan was originally part of the Town of Dorchester, although it has developed its own separate character and identity. The name of the area was derived from the Mattahunt Indian Tribe, which inhabited large areas of Milton, Dedham, Dorchester, Roslindale and Mattapan. The earliest development in Mattapan was near Mattapan Square and along what is now Babson Street. Trolley service on Blue Hill Avenue in the 1890's created a residential construction boom around Wellington Hill, which was then built up with substantial two- and three-family homes and a few large single homes. The southern area of Mattapan has developed gradually since then, with single family homes on fairly large lots during the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's, and Garden Apartment Developments during the 1950's and 1960's.

In recent years, Mattapan has been threatened with the kind of neighborhood decline and abandonment which has occurred to the north, in Dorchester and Roxbury, but as yet this is not a severe problem.

Blue Hill Avenue is the center of the Mattapan area, especially at Mattapan Square. Traditionally, the shops along the Avenue served virtually all the needs of the residents on nearby streets, who would walk down to see friends and shop, or who would ride the trolley home from work and buy food or other needs on the way home. The elimination of the trolley in the 1950's and competition from newer car-oriented suburban shopping centers has caused some decline along Blue Hill Avenue, except at the Square, where the City has made a major commitment to its revitalization. The Square now has one of the lowest store vacancy rates (3%) of any of the City's older shopping areas.

## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

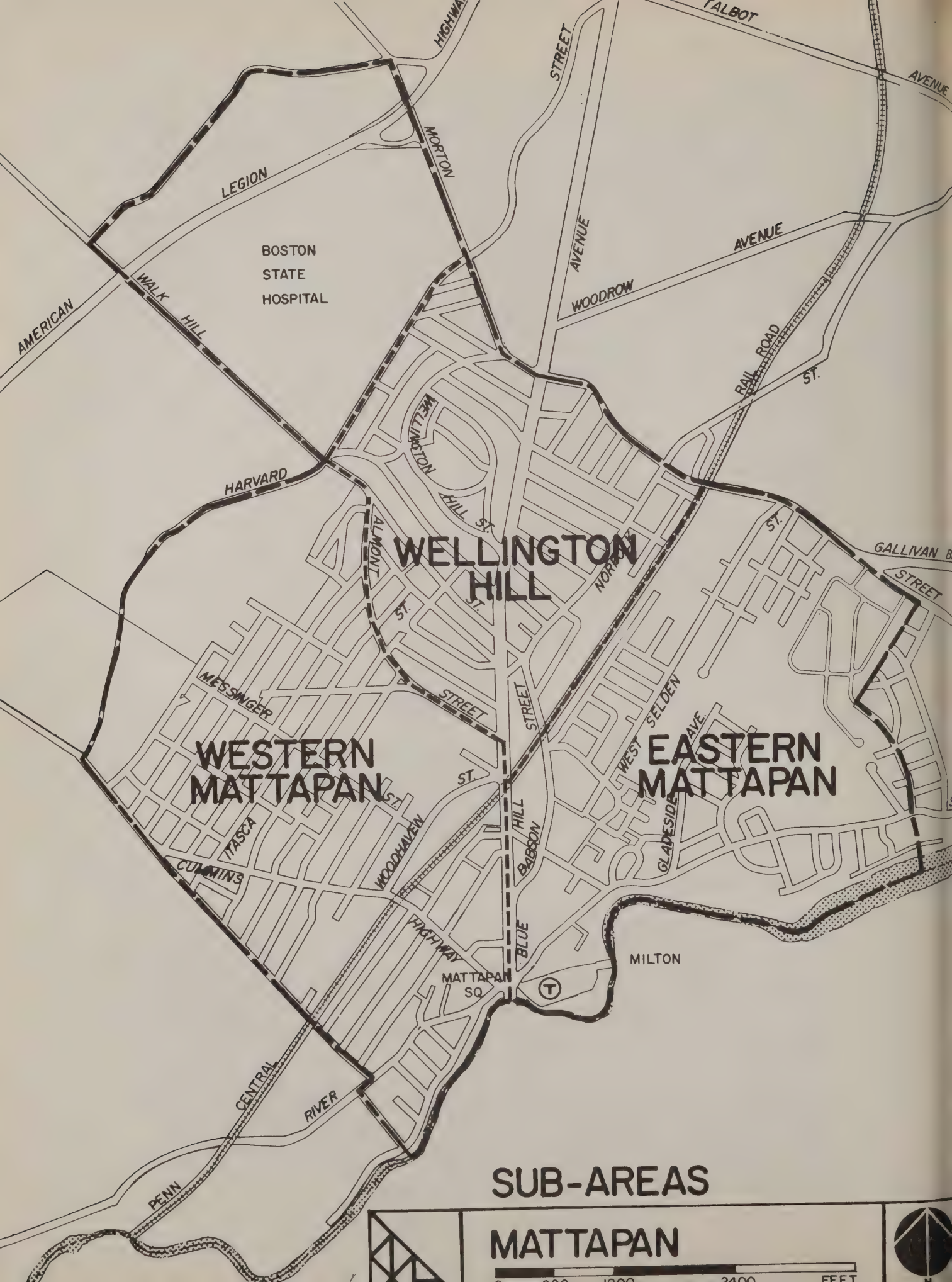
Information on population and housing in this report is derived primarily from the 1970 U. S. Census and 1960 U. S. Census. For purposes of analysis, the Mattapan area has been divided into 3 sub-areas: (1) Wellington Hill, (2) Western Mattapan and (3) Eastern Mattapan. (See Map of Sub-areas, and Table of Comparative Statistics.)

### WELLINGTON HILL

The northern portion of Mattapan is located on and around a hill, and is bounded by Morton Street, the Penn Central Railroad tracks, a short segment of Blue Hill Avenue, Almont Street, Walk Hill Street, and Harvard Street. This area underwent racial change in the 1960's, but other demographic characteristics of the population did not change significantly and the neighborhood remains a pre-dominantly middle-class suburban area.

The homes and yards on Wellington Hill are generally well maintained by owner-occupants. Abandonment has increased recently primarily due to mortgage foreclosure, often due to major repairs for which the owner doesn't have the cash and can't get a home repair loan. Most of the abandoned buildings belong to the FHA.





AMERICAN

WALK HILL

LEGION

BOSTON  
STATE  
HOSPITAL

HIGHWAY  
NORTON

STREET

AVENUE

WOODROW

AVENUE

RAIL ROAD

ST.

HARVARD

WELLINGTON  
HILL

ALMONT  
ST.

WILTON  
HILL ST.

NORTH  
ST.

GALLIVAN B.

STREET

WESTERN  
MATTAPAN

MEESINGER

ITASCA

CUMMINS

WOODHAVEN

STREET

ST.

STREET

HILL  
BASSON

BLUE

EASTERN  
MATTAPAN

WEST SELDEN

GLADESIDE  
DAVE

MILTON

MATTAPAN  
SQ

(T)

PENN

CENTRAL

RIVER

SUB-AREAS

MATTAPAN

0 600 1200 2400 FEET





## WESTERN MATTAPAN

The western area of Mattapan is bounded by Blue Hill Avenue, Almont Street, Harvard Street, Cummins Highway, Greenfield Street, and the Neponset River. This is an area where median income and Black population has increased since 1960, total population has also increased, largely due to the construction of new garden apartment complexes.

This is one of Boston's newest residential areas - most of the buildings are less than 40 years old. Housing conditions are good to excellent throughout the neighborhood. However, many residents feel threatened by the deterioration and abandonment to the north along Blue Hill Avenue. Abandonment is infrequent in this area, but has increased in the past few years. Almost all of the abandoned houses are foreclosures which now belong to the FHA.

## EASTERN MATTAPAN

The Eastern section of Mattapan is bounded by Blue Hill Avenue, the Penn Central railroad tracks, Morton Street, Maryknoll Street, Freeland Street, and the Neponset River. Population in this neighborhood increased slightly since 1960. This integrated area contains a mix of Irish, Jewish, Black and other ethnic groups. Median income increased slightly, and is about equal to the city as a whole.

The houses range in age from 20 years to 150 years old, and are in good to excellent condition. Two of Boston's most desirable public housing projects are in this area: the new elderly development on River Street, and the two-family duplexes in the Gallivan-Morton Project for families. Abandonment is rare, and virtually all the abandoned houses are FHA foreclosures.

# Comparative Statistics - Mattapan

## 1970 U.S. Census Data

<u>Population</u>	<u>Wellington Hill</u>	<u>Western Mattapan</u>	<u>Eastern Mattapan</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>City</u>
Total 1970	9,428	5,099	6,110	20,637	639,657
Change from '60	+2%	+16%	+8%	+9%	-8%
Total Black 1970	4,539	420	170	5,129	104,200
Change from '60	4	30	14	48	63,400
Aged 0-14 yrs. - 1970	2,847	1,100	1,010	4,957	
Change from '60	+18%	+9%	+5%	+12%	
Aged 64 yrs. & over	1,413	1,150	1,815	4,378	81,437
Change from '60	-23%	-7%	-4%	-17%	-5%
<u>Income</u>					
Median Family Income	\$8,350	\$11,200	\$9,900	\$9,500	\$ 9,133
Change from '60	+2%	+8%	+5%	+5%	+20%
% Families under \$5,000	22%	10%	16%	16%	22%
<u>Housing</u>					
Total Dwelling Units	3,118	1,971	1,950	7,039	232,856
Units Needing Fix-up in excess of \$1000	354	230	95	679	67,102
%Owner Occupied Structures of 1-4 units	85%	90%	85%	87%	80%
Mobility of Residents- Residence less than 5 years	68%	42%	39%	52%	50%

### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

In the past 6 years most of the public investment in Mattapan has been spent on many small public works improvement and modernization projects. Since 1968, the City spent approximately \$630,000 on street and sidewalk reconstruction and resurfacing, sewer and water projects and residential street lighting.

The City spent about \$250,000 on improvements in the Mattapan Square commercial area, for street repairs, sidewalk redesign and reconstruction, new lighting, trees, benches, etc. This was the first in a series of major public improvement projects intended to help revitalize older neighborhood shopping areas.

An indoor recreation building was constructed behind the Gallivan-Morton Housing Project, at a cost of \$300,000. Major repairs and new equipment were provided at Almont Playground and Walker Playground for \$190,000.

The Boston Housing Authority built 64 units of elderly housing just off River Street next to the Mattapan Chronic Disease Hospital.

### PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

There has been substantial private construction in Mattapan in recent years, primarily in residential and commercial developments. Many stores and offices in Mattapan Square have been modernized and there has been storefront rehabilitation and new construction on Cummins Highway. There have been several small townhouse apartment complexes built in Southern Mattapan near River Street and Cummins Highway; Morton Village, with 208 apartments near Morton Street, was completed in 1968, and Fairlawn Apartments, with 250 rental units was completed in 1969. This continues a pattern started in the late 1950's and early 1960's, when approximately 500 apartments were built in Southern Mattapan.

Last year, Star Market completed a very large modern supermarket and discount drug store next to Morton Village.







BOSTON  
STATE  
HOSPITAL

1. ALMONT PLAYGROUND
2. WALKER PLAYGROUND
3. GALLIVAN-MORTON RECREATION BLDG.
4. ELDERLY HOUSING PROJECT
5. POLICE STATION 3 RENOVATIONS

## PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74

MATTAPAN

0 600 1200 2400 FEET





BOSTON  
STATE  
HOSPITAL

LEGION

HARVARD

MESSINGER

ITASCA

CUMMINS

CENTRAL  
RIVER

MATTAPAN  
SQ

MILTON

RENOVATED NEW



RESIDENTIAL  
COMMERCIAL

PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1968-74

MATTAPAN





## D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

### 1. HOUSING ABANDONMENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION

#### Issue

Housing abandonment has become a serious concern of residents in Mattapan in recent years. Abandonment has many causes: fire, crime, lack of mortgage or home improvement loans, disinvestment by absentee owners, inability of tenants or homeowners to pay the full cost of the housing they occupy, mortgage or tax foreclosure, etc. Owners or tenants living near abandoned buildings lose confidence in the neighborhood, and cut back on maintenance and/or move out the area. Thus abandonment leads to further neighborhood decline and more abandonment.

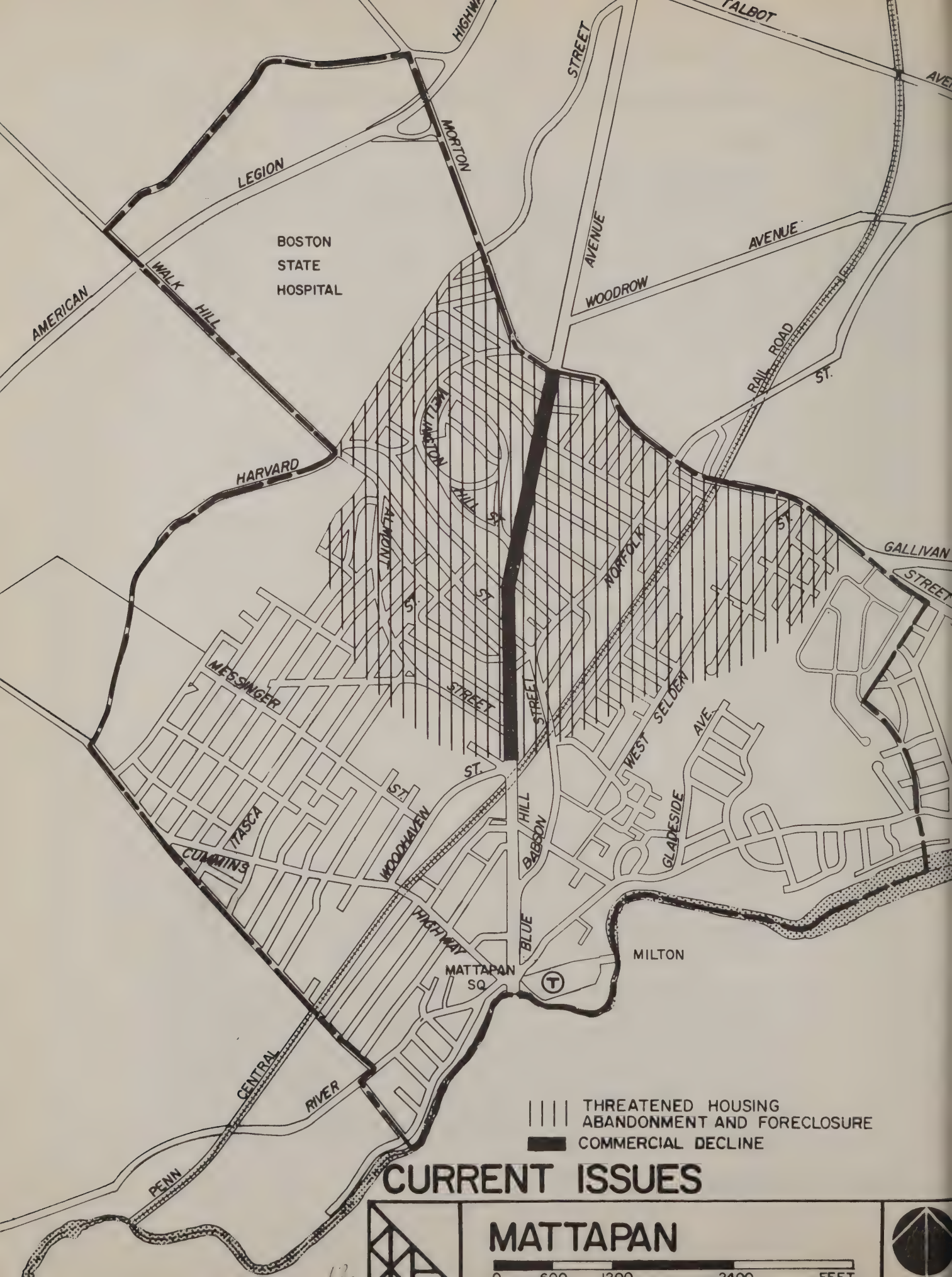
#### Strategy

In order to effectively reverse the self-reinforcing process of abandonment and decline, both abandoned buildings and occupied houses needing repair must be treated.

The new Housing Improvement Program which gives homeowners a cash grant of 20% of the cost of needed repairs will enable many owners to improve their property. This program will also help owners secure home improvement loans. Visible repairs in a neighborhood can start a positive cycle of restored confidence and additional repairs by owners who realize their neighbors are staying and working. To reinforce this positive effect, the Housing Improvement Program should conduct a door-to-door public relations campaign in selected target areas, for instance Wellington Hill, for maximum visibility and impact. The Housing Inspection Department should inspect badly dilapidated buildings in these target areas, to attempt to force the repair of "eyesores" which discourage nearby homeowners from making expensive repairs.

The city and community must work together to encourage banks to give mortgages and home repair loans in this area. The State Banking Commissioner has now ordered banks to disclose the geographic pattern of their deposits and loans. When this information is available, the city should work closely with community groups, local banks, and the Banking Commission to develop policies or legislation that will prevent "red-lining".

The City should proceed with a major public relations effort to promote confidence on the part of current residents, and also to encourage replacement buyers to seek housing in Dorchester, Franklin Field and Mattapan. Promotional brochures should be published highlighting neighborhood preservation and rehabilitation efforts, areas of architectural and historic interest, new or innovative public and private improvements, and the general quality of life available in this area of Boston.



BOSTON  
STATE  
HOSPITAL

LEGION

HARVARD

MESSINGER

TASCA

CUMMINGS

PENN

RIVER

MATTAPAN  
SQ

MILTON

||||| THREATENED HOUSING  
ABANDONMENT AND FORECLOSURE  
■ COMMERCIAL DECLINE

## CURRENT ISSUES

### MATTAPAN

0 600 1200 2400 FEET



There are vacant lots from house demoliton scattered throughout the residential neighborhoods in Mattapan. Most of these lots are or will be owned by the City, under the new Vacant Lot Program, the abutters will be offered these lots at very low cost, to enlarge their yards for gardens, play areas, or parking. This program will transform a community liability into a community asset.

Boston's ongoing Capital Improvement Program should be planned so as to have the maximum positive impact on neighborhood stabilization. The residential areas where the Housing Improvement Program will be concentrating should also be scheduled for public works, as needed, for instance street and sidewalk repairs, street lights, water and sewer improvements and street trees.

This coordinated program of positive forces will hopefully combine to reverse the circle of despair and dilapidation.

To effectively deal with abandoned buildings, the City must establish a process of fast condemnation, fast board-up, fast decision and rehabilitation possibilities, and fast demolition when needed. The City should also try various incentives to encourage new homeowners to acquire and repair structurally sound buildings. Possible incentives would be: an increased Housing Improvement Program Grant, tax forgiveness for 3 to 5 years after purchase, or some labor provided by the City from the Federal Comprehensive Employment Training Act Program.

In a few areas, for instance Leston Street and Fottler Road, large tracts of vacant land will result from the demolition of unsalvageable buildings. These large lots should be held for future development, and the City should work with nearby residents, developers, and banks to plan appropriate reuses for these potentially valuable pieces of land.

## 2. BLUE HILL AVENUE REVITALIZATION

### Issue

The Blue Hill Avenue shopping corridor has also suffered abandonment and decline. During the riots in 1968, many stores were vandalized or burnt. Shopkeepers lost confidence and moved out as soon as they could or stayed but did not modernize thier stores or update their inventory. Shopping habits have been changing, favoring large stores and suburban-style shopping centers to the detriment of many older shopping areas with small stores and very little convenient parking.



## Strategy

Blue Hill Avenue is the heart of this district, and it must be restored as the center of community and business activity. Initial efforts have thus far focused on Mattapan Square, where the City has made improvements designed to encourage shoppers to come to the Square. Expenditures for street and sidewalk improvements, lighting, off-street parking, and tree planting have totalled approximately \$250,000. This fairly modest investment has led local businessmen to fix up their stores both inside and out and has attracted new stores and offices to the Square; private improvements completed or planned will total at least \$4,000,000, and the commercial vacancy rate has declined to 3%.

Similar improvements should be made in the shopping areas at Morton Street and Walk Hill Street. But there are stores and other buildings along Blue Hill Avenue outside of these economically viable shoppings nodes; the City should encourage the conversion of the excess commercial property to other uses such as housing, recreation, cultural facilities, or job producing businesses.

The City should also provide technical assistance and cash grants for the rehabilitation of storefronts on Blue Hill Avenue. A small off-street parking area should be developed for the convenience of shoppers at Walk Hill Street.

#### E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The City's Investment Program for 1975 in Mattapan will be an effective contribution to neighborhood preservation and improvement. \$12.7 million has been committed, both from the City's Capital Budget and from Federal Community Development Revenue Sharing Funds.

CDRS funds will be concentrated heavily on Housing Preservation Programs. Approximately \$350,000 will be spent for Housing Improvement Program Grants, demolition and boarding of vacant buildings, and restoration and sale of vacant lots. Residential neighborhoods will also benefit from reconstruction and repair of streets and sidewalks, and residential street lighting at a cost of at least \$1.5 million.

A new elementary school is being built in western Mattapan at a cost of \$11.2 million. The gym and swimming pool will open in 1975, and will be available for community use.

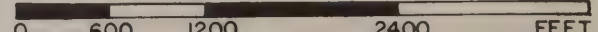
The major improvements at Mattapan Square will be completed with an \$80,000 parking lot, and a program for revitalization of the rest of Blue Hill Avenue will begin with the installation of commercial area street lighting at the Walk Hill Street shopping area. The program for the Avenue will be continued and expanded in subsequent years to change the image of this major road, which is the heart of the community and a symbol of Mattapan to thousands of people.



- 1. MATTAPAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL
- 2. MATTAPAN SQ. OFF-STREET PARKING
- 3. WALKER HILL ST. COMMERCIAL LIGHTING
- 4. WALKER PLGD.
- 5. HIP SITE OFFICE

# 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

## MATTAPAN





## F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

The City should continue its program for neighborhood revitalization in Mattapan. Special emphasis should be placed on the Housing Improvement Program and funds should be reserved for at least 300 buildings per year. Future needs for demolition and boarding will be more modest, on the order of 15 demolitions and 20 board-ups per year. The vacant lot program should be continued with all appropriate city-owned lots. Neighborhood capital improvements should be accelerated, especially street and sidewalk reconstruction and tree planting. The City should select a site and begin the development of a Comprehensive Community Center for Mattapan.

The improvement program for Mattapan Square should be completed and a revitalization program for the rest of Blue Hill Avenue should be started. The City should develop a storefront rehab incentive program, like H.I.P., and start it in Mattapan Square and Blue Hill Avenue.

G FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Housing Abandonment and Neighborhood Stabilization	Housing Fix-up	HIP = \$125,000	HIP - At least 300 Buildings Per Year
	"Code Enforcement" in HIP Target Areas		Provide Staff Support for Informal "Eyesore" Code Enforcement
	Vacant Lot Sales	Vacant Lot Program = \$40,000	Vacant Lot Program at Least 50 Lots Per Year
	Mortgages and Home Improvement Loans		
	Capital Improvements in Neighborhoods - e.g., Streets, Sidewalks, Trees, Water & Sewers, Street Lights, Parks	PWD-\$1,000,000, Walker Playground = \$80,000 River Street - Major Reconstruction City of Boston Construction = \$500,000 Mass. DPW Contribution = \$4,500,000	Continue Public Works Improvements Plant Trees on Streets With High Owner Occupancy
			Continue Improvements to Neighborhood Parks
			Develop a Mattapan Comprehensive Community Center
	Demolition of Worst Buildings	Demolition Program = \$175,000	Continue Demolitions, Approx. 20 Buildings Per Year
	Board-up Abandoned Buildings if Salvageable	Boarding Program = \$25,000	Continue Board-up, Approx. 20 Buildings Per Year

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Blue Hill Avenue Revitalization	Restore Abandoned Housing to Use by Tax Forgiveness, CETA, etc.		Commitment from City Treasurer and/or Assessor to Forgive Taxes plus HIP
	Redevelop Large Vacant Parcels		Land Assembly
	Complete Mattapan Square Improvements	Off-street parking on Cummins Highway - \$90,000	Storefront Rehab Program for the Square
	Encourage Private Housing Development at Fringes of the Square		
	Commercial Area Improvements at Walk Hill St., Morton St.	Walk Hill St. Lighting - \$20,000 Morton St. Lighting - \$30,000	Storefront Rehab, off-street Parking, Trees and Benches, etc.





M3/B16  
RA  
75/7  
pt. 10

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS  
DEPARTMENT  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

WORKING DRAFT  
FOR  
COMMUNITY REVIEW

BMA-0161

MISSION HILL

Background Information and Planning Issues

Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION

I.	BACKGROUND INFORMATION	3
A.	Short History of Mission Hill/Medical Center Area	
B.	Existing Characteristics	
C.	Past Public Investment	
D.	Past Private Investment	
II.	PLANNING ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	14
A.	Detrimental Influences	
B.	Capital Improvements and Public Facilities	
C.	Decline of Brigham Circle	
D.	New Housing	
E.	Institutional Expansion and Residential Stability	
III.	1975 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM	19
A.	Housing	
B.	Commercial Area Revitalization	
C.	Capital Improvements	
IV.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS	21



## INTRODUCTION

This planning report, prepared by the Mission Hill District Planner, is intended to assist local residents and City Officials who are defining the needs of the Mission Hill District. The report is divided into four major sections. The first section covers the background of the district including a short history, recent census data, and private and public construction activity during the past five years. The second part highlights a number of physical planning issues, which concern residents in Mission Hill. The third part of the report summarizes the 1975 public investment program for Mission Hill; and finally section four outlines public projects and activities which should be undertaken by the City or other governmental organizations.





MISSION HILL



## I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### A. SHORT HISTORY OF MISSION HILL/MEDICAL CENTER AREA

Mission Hill, once part of the Town of Roxbury, was annexed to Boston in 1867. Early settlements were farms and in the last decade of the 19th century Mission Hill experienced its first substantial growth. During this decade new streets opened and public transportation shifted from the horse drawn car to an electric car line, which by 1894 was in operation along Huntington Avenue and in 1899 extended along Brookline Avenue.

Before 1900, the Convent (House of Good Shepard), New England Baptist Hospital and the Martin School were the major institutional uses in Mission Hill. After 1900, institutions moved from their downtown locations to the Mission Hill/Medical Center Area because of improved public transportation, the need for larger facilities and lower land values relative to downtown. In 1906, the Harvard Medical School moved into five buildings on Longwood Avenue. In 1912, the Peter Brent Brigham Hospital was constructed and in 1914 the Children's Hospital moved to its Longwood Avenue site. The New England Deaconess and the Beth Israel Hospitals were constructed a short time later and by the end of World War II all of the major hospitals had been established.

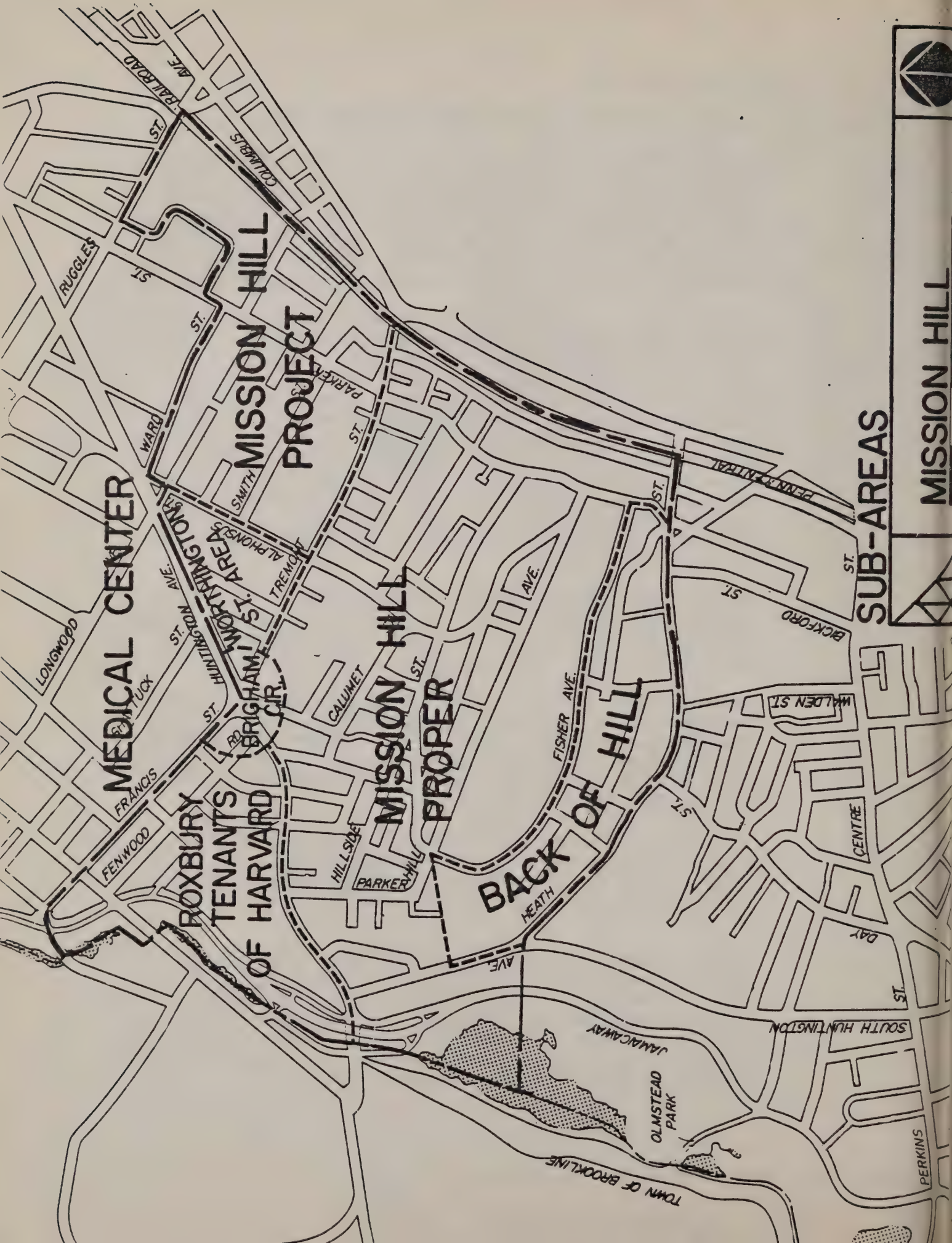
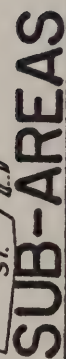
Housing construction preceded the development of the area's institutions during the later part of the 19th century although between 1900 and 1910 over 900 units of row and two family homes were constructed in the area south of Francis Street.

Between 1950 and 1970, Mission Hill experienced very little new institutional construction and almost no residential development, although a number of institutions began to have space problems for employees and patients. In some instances these institutions expanded by utilizing residences and non-institutional space in Mission Hill.

Mission Hill's public housing project was completed in two phases. Mission Hill Main was completed in 1940, and is the larger of the two, containing 1,023 units, covering almost 20 acres. Mission Hill Extension with 588 units was constructed in 1952.

Redevelopment activity in Mission Hill was limited to the Whitney Redevelopment Project which was completed in the early 1960's. The project includes three high-rise apartment buildings: Charlesbank Apartments (272 units), Back Bay Manor (270 units) and Franklin Square Apartments (formerly Back Bay Towers--146 units). This project was one of Boston's earliest redevelopment efforts not funded by federal renewal monies.







## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

The composition of people in Mission Hill has shifted in the last 20 years from a closely knit Irish Catholic family residential neighborhood to a heterogenous community of 13,000 people with various age and ethnic groups. It is now an area of single and multi-family houses inhabited by families, the elderly, a large number of students and young professionals, and low income families from the Mission Hill Project.

There are over 1,000 single, two and three family units and almost 4,000 multi-family units in Mission Hill. A recent survey by the Boston Redevelopment Authority determined that 70% of the housing units were in good condition with minor repairs required, 25% were in fair condition with moderate repairs required and the remaining 5% in poor condition.

While the district contains the largest concentration of medical and educational institutions in the City, most of the employees at the area's institutions reside outside the district and the median family income of an average family in Mission Hill is substantially below the City-wide median income of \$9,133. This is also partially due to the low income of families in the Mission Hill project.

According to a 1972 market study completed by Robert Gladstone and Associates, demand for housing is found in all price ranges and all income levels in Mission Hill. Specifically, there is a demand for smaller units created by student growth in the area, and a demand by an increasing number of professional individuals (such as physicians and professors) many of whom may desire to reside as close to their work as possible.

To describe the specific characteristics of Mission Hill, it is necessary to break down the district into its sub-areas (see Sub-Area map).

1. The Back of the Hill: This area, bounded by Fisher Avenue, Heath Street, Parker Street and South Huntington Avenue, includes 23 acres of predominantly vacant land owned by the Lahey Clinic and the Ruggles Baptist Church. Over the past 10 years approximately 150 housing units have been removed from the market by these institutions. Typically, residential buildings have been acquired, no major investment made, and buildings demolished as soon as they became vacant and unrentable.

Redevelopment of this vacant land and preservation of existing residential structures is a major concern of the City and of residents who have remained in the area. Both the Lahey Clinic and Ruggles Baptist Church have offered this land for sale.

2. The Roxbury Tenants of Harvard (RTH): This area, bounded by Francis Street, the Riverway, and Huntington Avenue, is also an area where over the past years institutional landbanking occurred to accommodate future expansion. The Roxbury Tenants of Harvard group, composed of tenants in Harvard owned buildings, organized during the 1960's to challenge the expansion plans of Harvard University and the Affiliated Hospital Center. At the present time, RTH is a co-sponsor with Harvard of 774 units of new subsidized and market rent housing on the old Convent site. This project will be financed by the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency and includes a below grade parking garage which will be operated by the Medical Area Service Corporation (MASCO). In addition, RTH has elicited Harvard sponsorship for the rehabilitation of 35 two and three family houses along Francis Street and Fenwood Road.
3. Mission Hill Proper: This area, bounded by Huntington and South Huntington Avenues, Tremont Street, Fisher Avenue and the Penn Central Railroad, covers approximately one-half of the district. Many of the streets in this area are narrow and hilly, and the buildings are generally two and three family wood frame structures. The New England Baptist Hospital and the 6+ acre Mission Hill Quarry is within this area.

Residents in this area complain of an increasing crime rate, inadequate water pressure on Parker Hill and automobile traffic from employees, doctors and visitors to the New England Baptist Hospital (NEBH). Residents living near the hospital also fear expansion of doctors' offices and nurses' residences into homes in the neighborhood. There is concern with expansion plans of NEBH, although at the present time NEBH has no active plans for new construction at the top of Parker Hill.

4. Worthington Street Area: This area, locally referred to as the "triangle", is bounded by Huntington Avenue and Tremont and St. Alphonsus Streets. While this is the smallest sub-area, it is one of the most vulnerable to institutional expansion because of its proximity to Brigham Circle medical institutions. Owner-occupied two and three story structures are concentrated on Wigglesworth and Worthington Streets while three high-rise apartment towers are within the Whitney Redevelopment area along St. Alphonsus Street and Huntington Avenue. This area has also been impacted by heavy institutional traffic, conversion of residential units to institutional uses, and by crime associated with Brigham Circle and the Mission Hill project.



5. Mission Hill Housing Project: This area, generally bounded by St. Alphonsus Street, Ward Street, Annunciation Road, Ruggles Street and the Penn Central Tracks, contains approximately 1,600 housing units. Because of extensive deterioration to buildings and recreation areas in the project, the Boston Housing Authority has appropriated approximately \$1.5 million during 1975 for rehabilitating and modernizing this project.
6. Brigham Circle: This commercial center at the intersection of Huntington Avenue and Tremont Street, contains over 35 stores. There are a number of small eating and drinking establishments and a supermarket, although the turnover of many establishments to marginal uses over the past five years has had a negative affect on the center. There are also serious traffic problems at Brigham Circle, due mainly to the intersection of four major and one minor street, and the presence of the Arborway MBTA line on Huntington Avenue.



# Comparative Statistics - Mission Hill

1970 U.S. Census Data

<u>Population</u>	<u>Mission Hill</u>	<u>City</u>
Total 1970	12,497	639,803
Change from '60	-25%	-8%
Aged 15-19 yrs. - 1970	1,153	60,900
Change from '60	-26%	+17%
Aged 20-24 yrs. - 1970	2,216	79,958
Change from '60	+59%	+41%
Aged 65 yrs. & over - 1970	1,723	81,437
Change from '60	-24%	-5%
<u>Income</u>		
Median Family	\$4,475- 8,625	\$9,133
% Families under \$5,000	24%	22%
<u>Housing</u>		
Total Dwelling Units	4,995	232,401
Units Requiring Repairs in Excess of \$1,000	1,380	67,102
Owner Occupied Units	33%	27%
Mobility of Residents- % of Residents in same house over 5 years in 1970	41%	50%

### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Since 1970 the major thrust of the City's Capital Improvement Program has been in strengthening neighborhoods through the construction and renovation of community facilities and parks, reconstruction of streets, and replacement of sewer and water lines. The City spent \$8.4 million for the construction of the Hennigan School on Heath Street and \$300,000 for the renovation of the Community Recreation Building at 68A Annuciation Road in the Mission Hill Project. The City also expended funds for the renovation of playground facilities at Jefferson, McLaughlin and Mission Hill playgrounds (See Public Facilities map). At the same time, there were over 25 streets reconstructed or resurfaced, and 10 streets that underwent sewer and water line improvements (See Public Improvements map).



- 1 COMMUNITY RECREATION BLDG.
- MISSION HILL PROJECT
- 2 MISSION HILL PLAYGROUND
- 3 MC LAUGHLIN PLAYGROUND
- 4 HENNIGAN SCHOOL
- 5 JEFFERSON PLAYGROUND

# PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-1974

## MISSION HILL

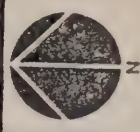
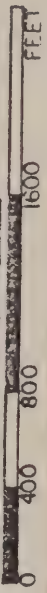




- STREET IMPROVEMENTS
- - - SIDEWALKS
- ..... SEWER & WATER IMPROVEMENTS
- ..... LIGHTING

# PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1970-74

## MISSION HILL



#### D. PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

A review of building permits for construction activities in excess of \$10,000 indicates that there has been substantial institutional investment in the Mission Hill/Medical Center Area, most of which has been concentrated in the Brigham Circle/Francis Street area. In addition, there has been new retail construction along Huntington Avenue and residential rehabilitation spending along Huntington and South Huntington Avenues (See Private Investment map).







## II. PLANNING ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

### A. DETRIMENTAL INFLUENCES

#### Issue

The presence of detrimental influences such as unsightly vacant lots and abandoned buildings in the Back of the Hill and Southwest Corridor areas, and boarded-up and decaying commercial buildings in the Brigham Circle area have discouraged investment and led to further decline in the quality of the district.

#### Strategy

1. Improve Quality of Existing Housing Stock: The City's Housing Improvement Program (HIP) which provides incentive for rehabilitation of 1-6 unit owner-occupied structures is available throughout Mission Hill and has funds for approximately 60 buildings during 1975. This program should target at least 100 buildings annually in future years. In addition, a \$50,000 matching grant toward establishment of the Neighborhood Housing Services Program (NHS), a high risk revolving loan fund, will start this year. NHS is a special program involving homeowners, the city and banks in a cooperative venture to encourage more mortgage lending in Mission Hill.  
  
Improved maintenance and modernization efforts at the Mission Hill Public Housing project should continue to be funded. The 1975 investment program includes \$1 million for window casement replacements in the Mission Hill Main project and \$500,000 for new security-oriented equipment including security screens and windows in the Mission Hill Extension project.
2. Eliminate Abandoned Buildings: The City should demolish buildings that are beyond the point of rehabilitation and initiate deep incentive programs to encourage the rehabilitation of buildings which could be saved.
3. Improve Vacant Land: Vacant lots, if city owned, should be cleaned-up by the City and sold or given to abutters or neighborhood groups to insure proper maintenance.
4. Upgrade Commercial Storefronts: The owners of buildings or stores should be provided with rehabilitation assistance or rebates for storefront rehabilitation. In Brigham Circle, there are approximately 35 stores which could benefit from such an approach.

## B. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

### Issue

There are a variety of problems in Mission Hill's neighborhoods which could be reduced through expenditure of city funds on capital items. These problems include: street and sidewalk reconstruction needs in the Back of the Hill and in the Mission Hill Housing Project; water line replacement at the top of Parker Hill; small neighborhood parks in Mission Hill proper; and new lighting throughout Mission Hill. All of these problems tend to lower the quality of the district's residential areas.

### Strategy

The City's strategy should include accelerated use of capital funds in existing residential neighborhoods in the district. Funds should be considered for improving existing parks such as Parker Hill Playground and recreation areas within the Mission Hill Project; small city owned lots should be considered for tot-lots; and a portion of the Mission Hill Quarry at Calumet Street should be considered for acquisition by the Boston Conservation Commission because of the Quarry's spectacular natural, topographical features.

New sidewalks should be programmed along Fisher Avenue, Parker Hill Avenue, Shepherd Avenue, Iroquois Street, Darling Street and Terrace Street. Street resurfacing or reconstruction should be programmed along Wensley Street, Eldora Street, Shepherd Avenue, portions of Sachem Street and Vining Street.

Longer term capital expenditures should be considered for replacement of the outmoded Farragut Elementary School.

## C. DECLINE OF BRIGHAM CIRCLE

### Issue

Mission Hill's major commercial center, Brigham Circle, has had a number of problems over the past few years including deteriorating security, the rising incidence of crime and burglaries, inadequate lighting, severe traffic congestion, poor storefront maintenance and a declining number of customers.

### Strategy

The City's 1975 investment program includes: new lighting along Tremont Street between Brigham Circle and Columbus Avenue; footpatrolmen assigned on a 12-hour daily basis to the Circle; and an improvement program for Huntington Avenue (under TOPICS) between Copley Square and Brigham Circle will include minor traffic island changes at Brigham Circle.

A Huntington Avenue improvement program should be provided in future years between Brigham Circle and South Huntington Avenue. It should include plans for major traffic changes at Brigham Circle and an analysis of whether a grade separated roadway at Brigham Circle is feasible and desirable should be made as part of this effort.

The City's strategy should also concentrate on: (1) encouraging merchants to rehabilitate their storefronts with city assistance; (2) developing guidelines for reuse of key parcels such as the Mission Hill Quarry; and (3) encouraging new businesses to locate in Brigham Circle with assistance of the City's neighborhood business district coordinator.



## D. NEW HOUSING

### Issue

With the exception of the 700 units of multi-family housing in the Whitney Urban Renewal Area and a number of multi-family buildings along Parker Hill Avenue, there has been very little new construction of housing during the past 10 years even though a substantial amount of vacant land exists in the district. The demand for larger family units and smaller units for the elderly and students has grown in the district during the past few years.

### Strategy

The 13 acre Mission Park Housing Development if approved by the City, is expected to provide 774 new units having both an income and unit size mix. However, there are at least two additional sites which could accommodate new housing units: (1) the Back of the Hill-23 acre site owned by the Ruggles Baptist Church and the Lahey Clinic; and (2) the 6+ acre Mission Hill Quarry owned by Harvard University, adjacent to Brigham Circle.

Housing development on the Back of the Hill site may require land writedown and interest subsidies to insure that rents are within the range of what is marketable in the area.

Based on present construction estimates, approximately \$1.5-2.0 million may be needed to cover the costs for shoring-up the hillside of the Lahey Clinic site against erosion and for reducing the high estimated land cost. Interest subsidies through federal programs such as Section 8 may be necessary to reduce market rents to levels compatible with market demand. If Massachusetts Housing and Finance Agency financing is used, a combination of Section 8 and Boston Housing Authority subsidies may be needed to subsidize the low income units.

The development of the Ruggles Baptist Church parcel should be assisted through elimination of some of the negative factors in the area including street and sidewalk deterioration, commercial decay along Heath Street and boarded-up units in the nearby Bromley-Heath housing project. It is also suggested that City-owned property in the area be combined with any new development to occur on the Ruggles property.

The 6+ acre Mission Hill Quarry contains portions of ledge and rock outcroppings, which will cause premium foundation costs for new development. Before any proposal for reuse of this site is developed, the concerns of nearby residents and businessmen should be considered.

## E. INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION AND RESIDENTIAL STABILITY

### Issue

The Mission Hill/Medical Center area has the largest concentration of educational institutions, hospitals, museums and research facilities in the entire Boston region. Over the past 10 years a number of new institutional buildings have been constructed and several additional ones have been proposed. Viewed in the aggregate, the scale of proposed development may have a major impact on the area. There is concern by community groups that this growth should not be allowed to adversely impact adjacent residential areas. Neighborhood concerns have focused on traffic and parking congestion, height, and general environmental impacts from the proposed projects.

### Strategy

The City should use its tax and zoning approval powers to reduce the size of a proposed institutional development, if necessary, or to reject a poorly conceived and inadequately planned project. Each proposal should be reviewed in terms of the following questions: (1) proposed use of taxable land and tax return to the City? (2) extent of increased demand on City's Circulation and Service Systems? (3) impact on area-wide housing stock? and (4) impact on, and consultation with, surrounding neighborhoods?

The City should also program both improved service delivery and capital funds on a priority basis to neighborhoods which may be adversely impacted by expanding institutions. This strategy should help to stabilize and to increase resident confidence in these impacted areas.



### III. 1975 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1975 public investment program concentrates in three areas: housing, commercial area revitalization and capital improvements.

#### A. HOUSING

The Housing Improvement Program (HIP) which provides incentives for rehabilitation of 1-6 unit owner-occupied dwellings, will be available throughout Mission Hill and has funds for approximately 60 buildings (\$75,000). The renovation of public housing units at the Mission Hill project by BHA will be aided with a \$1.5 million city appropriation for window casement replacement and security-oriented equipment. A \$50,000 matching grant has been made for establishment of a Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) program involving homeowners, the City and banks in a cooperative venture to encourage more mortgage lending in the Mission Hill area. It is also expected that the 774 unit Mission Park Housing Development, if approved by the City, will be under construction during 1975. This project, which will be funded with a \$40 million mortgage from the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency, will provide housing for individuals and families with a mix of incomes and ages.

#### B. COMMERCIAL AREA REVITALIZATION

The City's effort in commercial area revitalization initially includes the completion of new lighting along Tremont Street, between Brigham Circle and Columbus Avenue. In addition, traffic island improvements and upgrading of the MBTA reservation along Huntington Avenue is scheduled under the State's TOPICS program which is currently in final design.

#### C. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The City's capital improvements program for Mission Hill includes new play equipment at Jefferson Playground, renovation of Mission Hill Playground, and renovation of the Tobin Municipal Building.





- MISSION PARK HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
- TOPICS PROGRAM
- NEW STREET LIGHTS
- NEW WATER LINES
- 1 TOBIN MUNICIPAL BUILDING RENOVATIONS
- 2 MISSION HILL PLAYGROUND RENOVATIONS
- 3 JEFFERSON PLAYGROUND RENOVATIONS

# 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

MISSION HILL

#### IV. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

It is important that public funds be used in future years to maintain the viability of Mission Hill's residential neighborhoods. The areas for future public investment are outlined below in a general manner. These areas should be discussed and refined at neighborhood meetings during the coming months and specific recommendations made. The citizen participation process is critical to the delineation of specific projects to be funded.

Future investment for housing in Mission Hill should include the continuation of the Housing Improvement Program to provide funds for approximately 100 units per year; the continuation of funding on a matching basis to the Neighborhood Housing Services program, which provides money to homeowners who are considered high risks to the average mortgage lender; and modernization funds for the Mission Hill Housing Project should be continued.

Future capital investment expenditures should include a new school to replace the outmoded Farragut School; improvements to the Parker Hill Playground; acquisition of a portion of the Mission Hill Quarry as a natural park, new sidewalks, and street reconstruction.

An extended Huntington Avenue improvement program between Brigham Circle and South Huntington Avenue should be funded, and provide for a MBTA reservation of the same dimensions planned under the existing TOPICS program between Brigham Circle and Northeastern University. Consideration of a Huntington Avenue underpass at Brigham Circle should be included in this future planning.

A storefront rehabilitation program should be developed for the Brigham Circle commercial area. This program should provide a rebate to business owners for repairing the exteriors of their stores. To reduce crime in the Circle, funds for a footpatrolman should be continued and expanded.



# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Detrimental Influences	Improve quality of existing housing stock	HIP-\$75,000 NHS -\$50,000 Mission Hill Housing Project -\$1.5	Continuation of HIP program -100 units annually Utilize Section 8 funds Continue to modernize Mission Hill public housing project
	Eliminate abandoned buildings	Special city-wide funds are available for demolishing abandoned buildings	Provide for financial incentives to assist in rehabilitation, if possible
	Improve vacant land		Clean-up and dispose vacant land to individual and community sponsors
	Upgrade commercial storefronts		Use incentives to encourage Brigham Circle merchants to rehabilitate their storefronts
Capital Improvements and Public Facilities	Use Capital expenditures to strengthen neighborhoods	Jefferson Plgd. -\$50,000 Mission Hill Plgd. -75,000 Tobin Building Renovation - \$272,00	Acquire and preserve portion of Mission Hill Quarry site for a "natural park" Replace Farragut School Renovate Parker Hill Plgd. Street and sidewalk reconstruction - Sewer & water line improvements - New Street lighting
	Improve traffic circulation	TOPICS Program: Huntington Avenue (Copley Square-Brigham Circle)	Huntington Ave. Improvement Program: (Brighton Circle-So. Huntington Avenue)
Decline of Brigham Circle	Improve lighting	New lighting: Tremont St. (Brigham Circle-Columbus Avenue)	Additional lighting at Brigham Circle
	Stimulate and attract new businesses		



FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
New Housing	Reuse Mission Hill Quarry site		
	Encourage storefront rehabilitation		Use incentives to encourage merchants to rehabilitate their storefronts
	Maintain Footpatrolman in Brigham Circle to enforce parking restrictions and to improve security	Footpatrolman is now assigned to the Circle on a 12 hour basis	Continue footpatrolman in Brigham Circle
Institutional Expansion and residential stability	Encourage private housing investment	Mission Park Housing Development-774 units (MHFA-\$40 million mortgage)-awaiting city approval	Development of Back of Hill & Mission Hill Quarry sites for housing
	Use of City's tax and zoning review powers		



M3/B16  
RA  
75/7

pt. 11

WORKING DRAFT  
FOR  
COMMUNITY REVIEW

NORTH END - WATERFRONT

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June, 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.	SHORT HISTORY	[3]
B.	EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	[5]
	North End Waterfront	
C.	PAST PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT	[8]
D.	ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	[12]
	1. External Pressures on the Community	
	2. Housing Problems	
	3. Social Change	
	4. Capital Improvements	
	5. Commercial Center Needs	
E.	1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[17]
F.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS AS RELATED TO ISSUES, STRATEGIES AND 1975 PLANNING PROGRAM	[14]





## INTRODUCTION

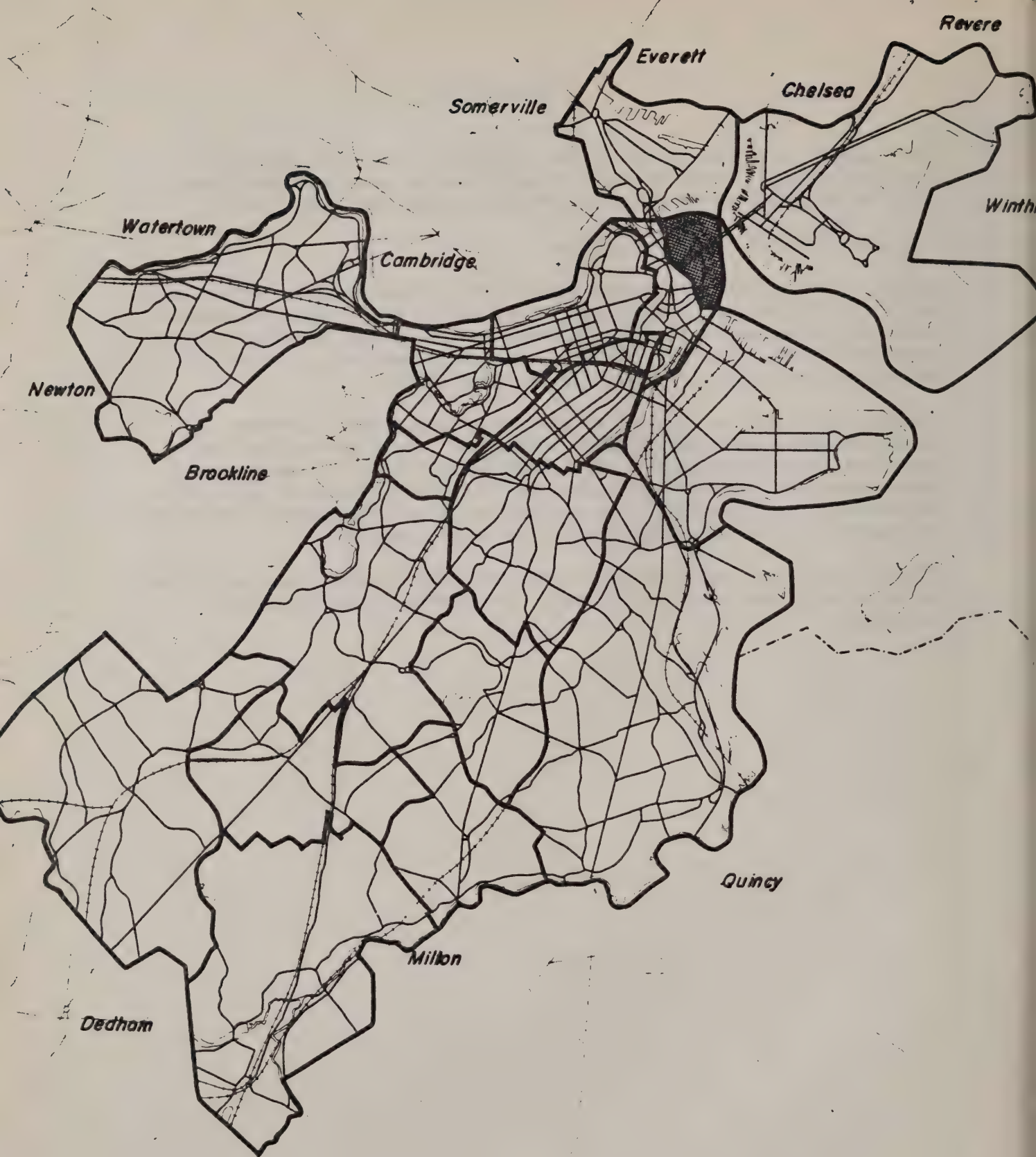
This report, prepared by the North End District Planners, is a draft document which is meant to facilitate discussion among residents and City representatives on planning strategies and investment needs.

The report does a number of things:

First, it establishes a base of population, income and housing data as well as a listing and analysis of recent public and private investment in North End-Waterfront. This information can be used by those who are involved in the planning process, neighborhood residents, Little City Hall staff and other City agencies and departments.

Second, it offers an analysis of the major issues which confront the community along with recommended strategies. These strategies should form the basis of discussion for community residents for the Community Development and Capital Improvement participation process as well as for involvement in issues which are not addressed by City expenditures such as zoning, private development or State funded programs.

Third, the report makes recommendations for investments, both public and private, which are necessary to help carry through the recommended strategies.



NORTH END/WATERFRONT



## A. SHORT HISTORY

The North End is one of the oldest neighborhoods in the City. In 1664, Hanover Street was the main artery of Boston with a shore road around the greater part of the district.

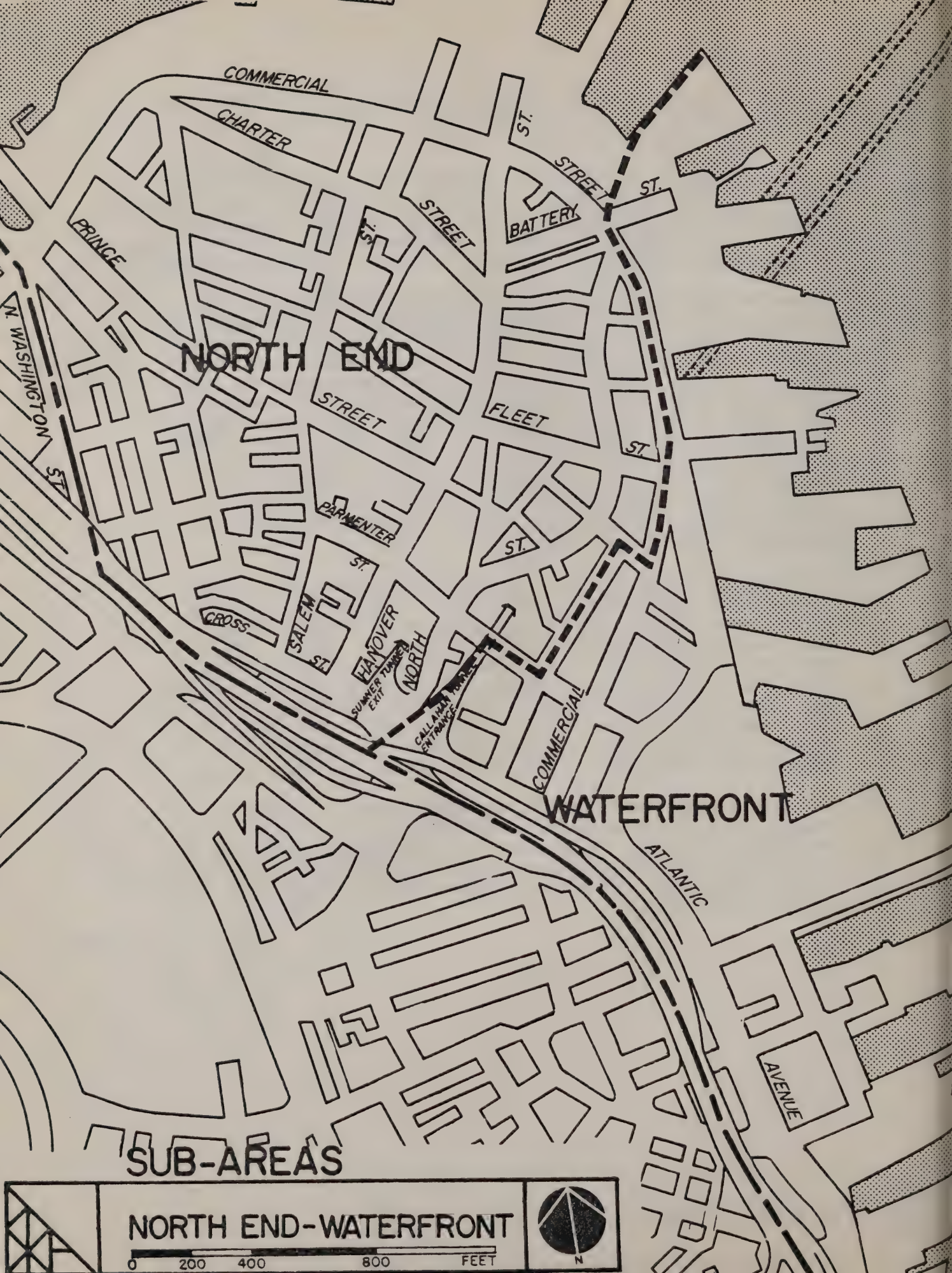
About the time of the Revolution a marked change took place in the character of the North End and a 1795 survey shows continued filling toward the east. By 1800 there were three mills for meal, lumber and chocolate on what is now Blackstone Street and on Commercial Street there were factories for brass, cannons, bells and earthenware.

Since the Revolution, the North End has been the first home for thousands of immigrants. The Irish immigrated in large numbers in the early nineteenth century. They supplied Boston with needed low skilled labor force and lived in the former mansions, crowded one family to a room. Eastern European Jews arrived between the late 1850's and 1880's again supplying needed labor. This immigration was housed in cold water tenement buildings which replaced the worn out mansions. The Italians arrived in large numbers in the 1890's and since then, the North End has been overwhelmingly Italian. The dense physical structure of the area was finalized when the last major tenements were built by 1920. Between 1920 and 1950, the physical and social characteristics of this ethnic neighborhood remained relatively unchanged.

Today the North End is within the heart of the downtown, yet semi-isolated and very different from the core of the City. The overriding reason for the contrast in scale and character has been the construction of the Central Artery in the early 1950's. Built to facilitate the movement of suburban commuters into and out of the City, the highway physically separated the North End from the rest of Boston. This separation was significantly reinforced by the large scale Urban Renewal projects (Government Center, West End and Waterfront) which almost surround the North End and highlight the demarcation between the old and new in Boston.

The Waterfront Renewal Project, in recent years, has begun to change the physical and social appearance of the North End and Waterfront areas. New developments such as Harbor Towers, and the conversion of the historic wharf buildings into luxury housing have begun the creation of a new neighborhood very different from the adjacent North End.





NORTH END

WATERFRONT

SUB-AREAS

NORTH END-WATERFRONT





## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Information on population and housing in this report is derived from the 1970 U.S. Census. The North End - Waterfront district includes the area from the Central Artery to Boston Harbor between the Charlestown Bridge and Rowes Wharf. For the purpose of this report the division between the North End sub-area and the Waterfront sub-area is the Waterfront urban renewal boundary. This line runs from the entrance of the Callahan Tunnel to Richmond Street, south on Richmond to Fulton Street east along Fulton to Lewis, south on Lewis to Commercial, north to Hanover and east on Hanover to the edge of Boston Harbor.

### THE NORTH END SUB-AREA

The North End of Boston is a unique segment both physically and socially in the City. Its population is primarily Italian, both in ethnic origin and social behavior. The neighborhood's lifestyle is oriented around the Italian culture which places a heavy emphasis on the family, its traditions and its closeness. Recently, the North End has begun to attract a new, non-Italian resident population because of its proximity to the Downtown business district and its reputation as a safe, low rent district. Many residents feel that the growth of this culturally diverse segment threatens the continued existence of this cohesive community.

On the other hand, the North End is a typical Boston neighborhood. It has experienced a significant population decline of 14% since 1960. Most of this decline occurred prior to 1965 and has since stabilized. Data on immigration patterns is sketchy but does reflect a 19% decrease in first and second generation foreign born residents since 1960. In addition, the Italian population has declined from 68% of the total population in 1960 to 63% in 1970. The North End also experienced a substantial decline (8%) among the 20-34 age group in 1950-1960 but this group has remained stable at 20% since 1960. This indicates a growing preference on the part of singles and childless couples to settle temporarily in the North End, close to work, shopping and entertainment. In 1970, 15% of the population was 65 years or older compared to 13% citywide. It is expected that this age group will increase in numbers because of the strong social ties which older residents have to the traditional Italian community.

The housing stock in the North End, most of which was built at the turn of the century, is predominantly in good condition. There are, however, a large number of units in need of major improvements to the electrical and plumbing systems. The 1970 census indicates 40% of all dwelling units are lacking some or all plumbing facilities. In recent years, individual owners have renovated many of the apartments, modernizing and converting them to one and two-bedroom

units. Since the costs of these improvements were privately financed, they have been reflected in increased rents. The actual number of dwelling units declined only slightly since 1960, but many larger units have been converted into smaller units making it difficult for families to find adequate housing in the North End. Only 14% of the units are owner-occupied in the North End compared to 26% citywide. The majority of the structures contain 3 or more dwelling units.

The median family income in the North End has risen to \$8,321, only \$812 below the City's level of \$9,133, a favorable contrast. In 1970, 33% of the population earned over \$10,000, with 25% between \$10,000 and 15,000. The educational level does not compare as favorably, however. In 1970, the median years of education completed was 8.4 compared to 12.1 citywide. Only 24% of the population graduated from high school and 4% from college. In large part, this is a reflection of foreign immigration in the North End in the 1940's and 50's. Most people obtained jobs for which education was not a prerequisite and youths were subsequently raised to aspire to similar positions. The decline in immigration levels and in the supply of blue-collar jobs in the city has led to a slight reversal of this trend among North End youth.

#### THE WATERFRONT SUB-AREA

The Waterfront community is one of Boston's newest residential sectors, created through the urban renewal process. Formerly, the district was used for commercial and industrial purposes and had few residents. While this community is geographically adjacent to the North End, socially and physically, it is not an extension of the Italian community.

The 1970 census reports a population of 943, with a median family income of \$11,100. 60% earned over 10,000 per year, 18% between 10,000 and 12,000, 36% between \$12,000 and 25,000. The majority of these residents either do not have children or their children are adults and not living at home. The upper income composition in the Waterfront will be altered somewhat in the future with the construction of two publicly assisted housing structures which are currently underway. One of these is clearly designated for lower income elderly residents.

Since 1970, several hundred apartment units have been constructed or rehabilitated in the Waterfront bringing the total number of dwelling units up to approximately 1,000. This figure is expected to reach 1,800 with a projected population of 3,000 when the Urban Renewal Plan is complete. All of the constructed or planned housing in this area is within the renewal project. Inasmuch as it is either new construction or the result of extensive renovation, the housing stock is in very good condition and not likely to be in need of major repairs for years to come.



# COMPARATIVE STATISTICS - NORTH END - WATERFRONT

1970 U.S. Census Data

<u>Population</u>	<u>North End</u>	<u>Waterfront</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>City</u>
Total 1970	10,134	943	11,077	641,071
%Change from '60	-15%	+72%	-8%	-8%
Italian Origin	6,310	104	6,414	44,975
%Change from '60	-21%	0	-21%	-24%
Aged 0-19 yrs.	2,634	97	2,731	213,741
Percent of Pop.	26%	10%	25%	33%
**%Change from '60	-4%	-10%	-5%	+1%
Aged 20-34 yrs.	2,084	394	2,478	156,456
Percent of Pop.	21%	42%	22%	24%
**%Change from '60	+1%	+21%	+1%	+3%
Aged 65 yrs. & over	1,488	120	1,608	81,718
Percent of Pop.	15%	13%	15%	13%
**%Change from '60	+1%	+5%	+1%	+1%
<u>Income</u>				
Median Family	8,321	11,107	8,000- 11,999	9,133
% Families under \$5,000	25%	18%	22%	22%
% Families over \$10,000	33%	60%	47%	44%
<u>Housing</u>				
Total Dwelling Units	4,139	600	4,739	232,856
Units Needing Fix-up in excess of \$1,000	1,251	N/A	1,251	67,102
Owner Occupied Units	14%	3%	7%	27%
Market Condition	Moderately Rising	Strong	Moderate- Strong	Stable
Mobility of Residents People in Same House over 5 years 1970	61%	N/A	61%	50%

\*\* This figure has been computed to show percent change in age composition of population between 1960 and 1970. For example, in 1960, 12% of the population was 65+ years; in 1970, 13% was 65+. Change is 1%.

### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

From 1968-74, \$2,356,023 was spent in the North End community, \$1,576,373 of which was used to construct and renovate public facilities to upgrade the parks and recreational centers in the neighborhood. In particular, the Charter Street Playground, Cutillo Playground, DeFillippo Playground, Copps Hill Terrace and the North End Park received considerable attention.

In addition, many of the streets in the North Station area, outside the residential North End, were subject to major improvements, i.e., street resurfacing, new lighting and improved sewer and water systems.

15.6 million dollars have been committed to major project improvements in the Waterfront since 1968. This represents a major public investment designed to substantially improve the total environmental quality of this historic district. In many instances, efforts were made to restore the existing structures while converting warehouses into very desirable residential units. In addition to providing residential uses, commercial and institutional development has been encouraged. The project also includes the Faneuil Market Rehabilitation Program.

### PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

A review of building permits for construction activity in excess of \$10,000 from 1968-1974 shows that there have been primarily residential and commercial rehabilitation in the North End-Waterfront district. The renovation in the Waterfront is directly attributable to public investment which has spurred private investment, and strengthened confidence in the real estate market in this sector. In the North End, individual landlords have modernized numerous apartment buildings, making extensive repairs to the electrical and plumbing systems. In many instances larger apartment units have been converted to one and two-bedroom units. While these units offer improved quality living conditions, the rents which accompany them very often place them in a category inaccessible to the average North End resident. They are attractive, however, to non-residents and appear to be a drawing factor in the rise in the new, non-ethnic population in the community.





- STREET RESURFACING
- STREET & SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS
- SEWER & WATER
- LIGHTS

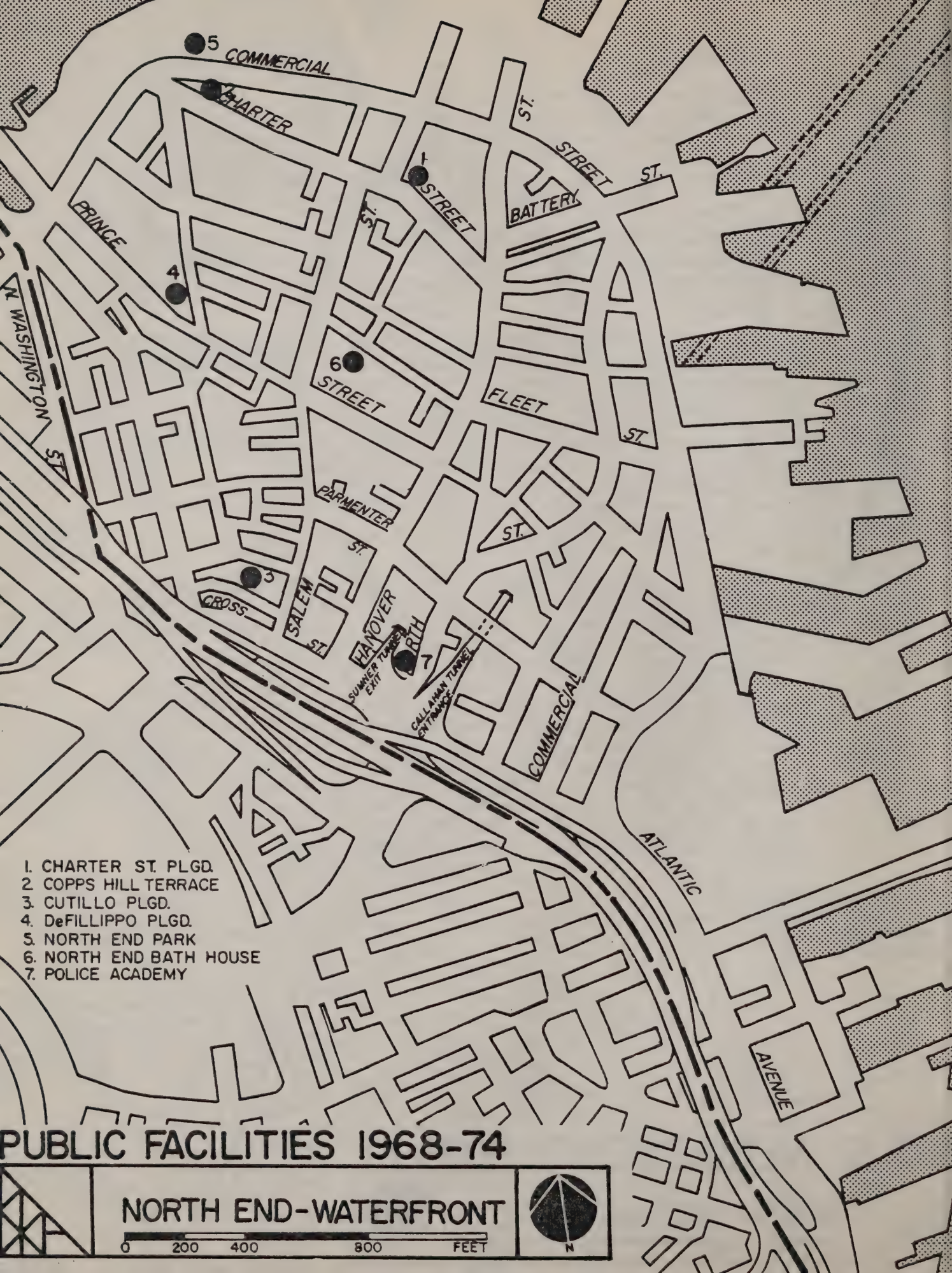
# PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1968-74

NORTH END-WATERFRONT

0 200 400 800 FEET







- 1. CHARTER ST. PLGD.
- 2. COPPS HILL TERRACE
- 3. CUTILLO PLGD.
- 4. DeFILLIPPO PLGD.
- 5. NORTH END PARK
- 6. NORTH END BATH HOUSE
- 7. POLICE ACADEMY

PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74

NORTH END-WATERFRONT

0 200 400 800 FEET







RENOVATED NEW  
□ ■ RESIDENTIAL  
△ ▲ COMMERCIAL  
○ ● INSTITUTIONAL

PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1968-74  
EXCESS OF \$10,000

NORTH END-WATERFRONT

0 200 400 800 FEET





## D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

### 1. EXTERNAL PRESSURE ON THE NORTH END-WATERFRONT STABILITY

#### Issue

Geographically the North End adjoins the City's major downtown development and Urban Renewal projects, separated only by the Central Artery. As such, it has been subject to many spinoff effects of development. Real estate speculation has increased the cost of home ownership in the area and has affected the rental structure by attracting middle income singles and childless couples who work in the Downtown. This group provides a stimulus to convert family-size apartments into smaller units. Additionally, the number of bars and restaurants has increased to meet the level of demand by office workers, inner city residents and other people attracted to this ethnic community. The narrow North End streets have become extremely congested from the increased traffic flow seeking relief from the Expressway, often making fire and police access difficult. Parking problems have intensified.

#### Strategy

Policy-oriented studies of three particular issues: zoning, bars and restaurant activity, and parking are needed. The active community groups should be involved in these studies so that their interests are represented and to heighten their awareness of the technical issues associated with the problems.

### 2. HOUSING NEEDS

#### Issue

The bulk of the housing stock in the North End was built in the early 1900's as cold water, tenement housing. While many of these units have been well maintained and renovated, there are a large number which still require major renovation if they are to meet building and health code requirements. At present, the demand for housing in the North End is great because of long-term residential attachment to the community and its reputation as a unique, safe, low rent district within walking distance of Government Center. Landlords in the past have had to privately finance the cost of improvements and increase their rents to make ends meet. This has made it difficult for long-term residents to find suitable housing within their means. Many attribute increased rents as a major factor in their decision to move out of the community. Families with young children complain that many apartments have been converted into studios, one, and two-bedroom units which are both too expensive and too small for their purposes. Rent





- CENTRAL ARTERY DEPRESSION
- ... COMMERCIAL CENTER REVITALIZATION
- NEIGHBORHOOD WIDE ISSUES:  
HOUSING, EXTERNAL PRESSURE,  
SOCIAL CHANGE

# CURRENT ISSUES

NORTH END-WATERFRONT

0 200 400 800 FEET





Control has not been actively published in the North End and many residents do not understand their legal rights and landlords are not forced to report rent increases. Although elderly housing is currently under construction with additional proposals under consideration, there is a need for a nursing care facility in the immediate community for elderly who can no longer live alone. These people predominantly speak Italian as their native language and therefore need special services which only a community facility can provide.

### Strategy

The City's 1975 Housing Improvement Program will assist owners in renovating many apartment units. However, while the North End is primarily a residential community, its housing stock is often contained in buildings of more than 6 units. Additionally, a substantial number of buildings are absentee-owned and, therefore, are not eligible for this program. A modification of the HIP is needed so that more North End units will benefit from the rebate program. Development of a comprehensive housing strategy should be undertaken this year. This strategy should encourage neighborhood stabilization without exerting pressure on segments of the population to leave or live in substandard housing. The community's awareness of rent control and the protection it affords should be increased. Cooperative home-ownership should be explored as a potential means for increasing the level of owner-occupancy in the North End. Its feasibility should be carefully considered. Funding sources for a community nursing care facility should be explored and technical assistance provided to those interested in establishing such a facility.

## 3. SOCIAL CHANGE

### Issue

The North End-Waterfront district has begun to evidence social change on many fronts. The homogeneous Italian community is now attracting a new non-ethnic population. The absolute level of immigration has declined and many aspects of the traditional ethnic lifestyle appear to be giving way to the gradual assimilation of American cultural behavior and values. Adolescents and their parents often live in separate worlds with youth trying to shed tradition. Professionals in the community report unrest, boredom and low educational motivation among many adolescents. While income levels are rising, educational requirements for employment opportunities are rising also. Often the pressures on adults to respond to acculturation on one hand, and daily life in an ethnic community on the other, present social and emotional difficulties. The elderly population is the most resistant to physical and social change. They depend upon the community for their support -- physical, social and emotional.

## Strategy

There are several active social service agencies in the community. A review of their programs and activities would be helpful to establish where there are voids or overlaps in service delivery. Emphasis should be directed toward working with a community task force to establish an effective adolescent program which will strengthen self-confidence and increase motivation among youth while lowering the incidence of boredom through activities designed particularly to interest youth. An on-going process of communication between residents, social service organizations and responsible city departments should be encouraged to insure that the community's future social needs are adequately met.

## 4. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

### Issue

The North End is a community which utilizes its network of streets, sidewalks and playgrounds extensively. Because of the high level of pedestrian activity and the lack of "green" backyards for children to play in, the community's parks and recreational facilities are ever in need of maintenance, and pedestrian access is a continual point of concern. The present Salem Street ramp under the artery is poorly lighted and continually needs cleaning. The Government Center Garage, the North End's closest parking garage is also poorly lighted and badly maintained. Thefts and assaults have been reported on numerous occasions.

### Strategy

Several recreational areas are scheduled for renovation and an addition to the North End Park is in the planning stage. At this point, the community needs a comprehensive recreational plan so that efforts can be concentrated on improving and adding those facilities which are most important to the overall community. Indoor recreational facilities need upgrading and expansion. Street lighting in conjunction with sidewalks and street trees are needed on several streets to improve the residential environment. The whole length of the under-artery needs a unified plan including cleaning, painting and lighting, along with improved pedestrian access. Lighting in the Government Center Garage should be improved. An extra secure area for overnight parking is recommended.



## 5. COMMERCIAL CENTER NEEDS

### Issue

The Hanover/Salem Street Commercial Center is a very active area and appears to satisfy the major needs of North End residents. In addition it attracts a large number of shoppers who are looking for ethnic specialty items. Many of these people are former residents who return weekly to shop. These people usually arrive in their cars and occupy the limited residential parking and also double park along Hanover and Cross Streets, creating a hazardous situation. Most of the enterprises are small family style operations which are experiencing problems of vandalism and petty crime. Individual owners have begun rehabilitating their storefronts on a limited basis. The overall center could benefit through a unified approach to fix-up.

### Strategy

Pedestrian and vehicular access to the Commercial Center should be examined carefully and efforts made to reduce the potential level of hazard and inconvenience. Shoppers should be encouraged to utilize the Government Center Garage. A shuttle bus service should be considered to bring residents and shoppers to and from the garage. As part of the City's overall Commercial Revitalization Program, information and technical seminars should be provided to local businesses along with improved security systems and increased street police patrolmen. The North End Businessmen's Association should be encouraged to participate in this program which can coordinate the merchants' activities to strengthen the overall commercial center. The merchants should be encouraged to adopt a system of design control on storefronts to maintain the character of the area.

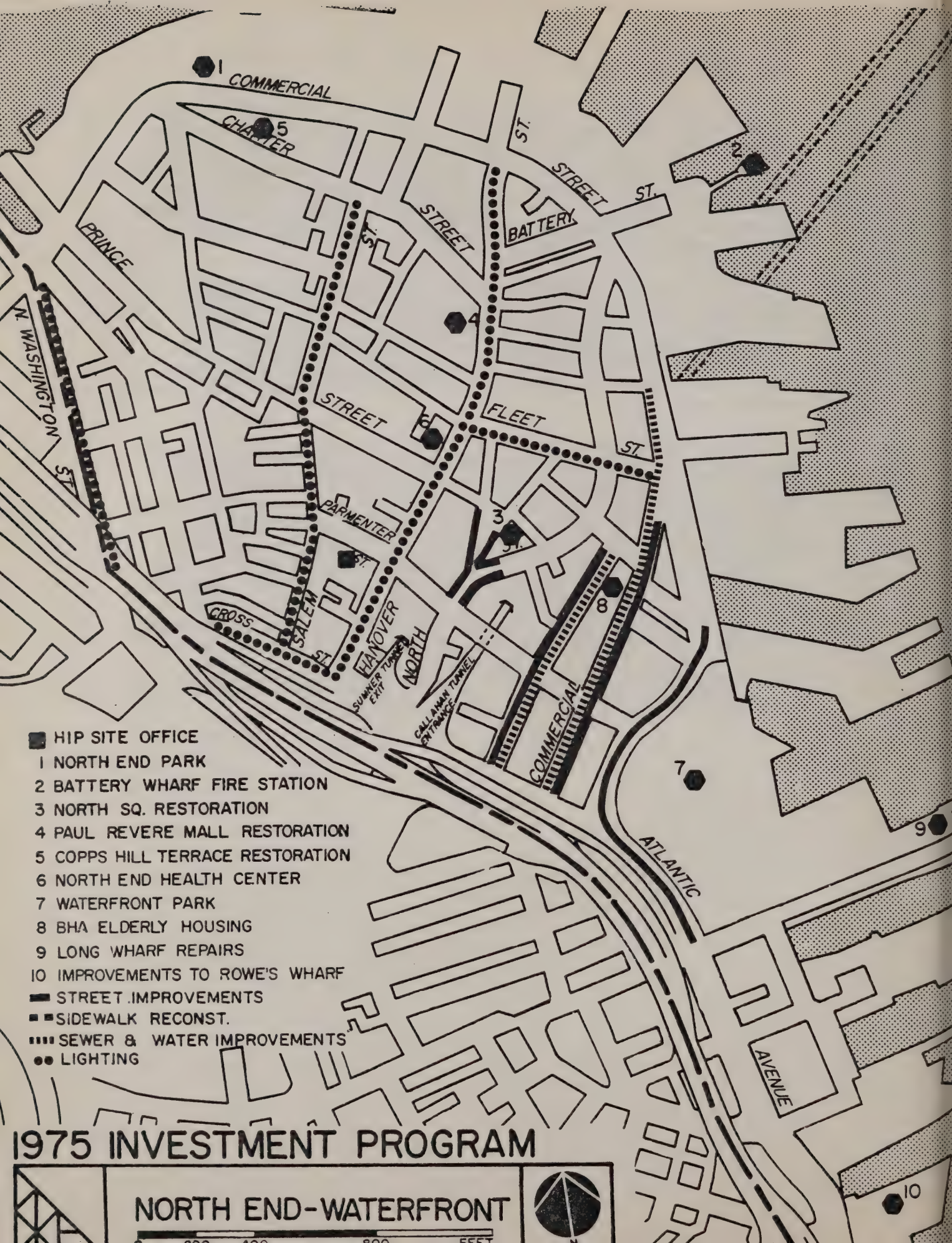
#### E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

In the North End-Waterfront District, the 1975 Investment Program is geared to three areas: housing, capital improvements and urban renewal activities totalling 13.5 million. In the North End, \$3.8 million will be spent on housing and capital improvements. Rehabilitation of the housing stock will be encouraged through the implementation of the City's Housing Improvement Program which provides incentives for resident-owners of six-unit structures or less to perform needed improvements.

The city's capital investment in the North End includes design and construction of Phase II of the new North End Park, construction of Battery Wharf Fire Station and restoration of several park and recreation areas (North Square, Paul Revere Mall and Copp's Hill Terrace). New street lighting is anticipated on several of the major thoroughfares and the city will acquire the North End Community Health Center.

The Urban Renewal Activities for 1975 will continue the construction and planning processes already underway in the Waterfront Project. \$6.3 million is programmed for major project improvements here. This year's efforts will include the construction of the Waterfront Park (\$2.5 million) and the relocation of the existing Atlantic Avenue (\$1.5 million). Reconstruction of streets in the Faneuil Market vicinity (\$1 million) is expected along with major utility and street improvements on Fulton and Commercial Streets (\$500,000). Rotted piers on Long Wharf will be removed. In addition, the M.B.T.A. underground power lines will be relocated and deteriorated piers on Rowes Wharf will be removed so that this site can be developed into a State pier for commuter boats. A \$3.4 million Boston Housing Authority elderly housing development at Fulton and Richmond Streets, will provide 103 units of housing.





- HIP SITE OFFICE
- 1 NORTH END PARK
- 2 BATTERY WHARF FIRE STATION
- 3 NORTH SQ. RESTORATION
- 4 PAUL REVERE MALL RESTORATION
- 5 COPPS HILL TERRACE RESTORATION
- 6 NORTH END HEALTH CENTER
- 7 WATERFRONT PARK
- 8 BHA ELDERLY HOUSING
- 9 LONG WHARF REPAIRS
- 10 IMPROVEMENTS TO ROWE'S WHARF
- STREET IMPROVEMENTS
- - - SIDEWALK RECONST.
- .... SEWER & WATER IMPROVEMENTS
- LIGHTING

# 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

NORTH END-WATERFRONT

0 200 400 600 800 FEET





## F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

The future investment needs of the North End - Waterfront fall into several categories: housing, capital improvements, commercial center programs and social services. Primarily a specific comprehensive housing strategy is needed to address this inner-city residential neighborhood. The present Housing Improvement Program is limited to owner-occupied buildings of six units or less. Many buildings in the North End exceed six units, and approximately 50% of the buildings are absentee-owned. The residential environment should continue to be upgraded through regular street and utility improvements and continued maintenance of park and recreational facilities. In addition, new construction may be needed to satisfy the community's demand for indoor recreation. The Hanover/Salem Street Commercial area is a strong center. The merchants, however, will need increased police protection and improved security systems along with increased knowledge of new and effective marketing and management techniques. Future investment in the area of social services will be necessary to assist the community in self-improvement, particularly with respect to teen support services and programs, and elderly services. Day care services may also need to be expanded.

G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
<u>EXTERNAL PRESSURE ON NORTH END STABILITY</u>			
Real Estate Speculation	Zoning Policy Review. Develop and publish criteria for considering variances		
Pressures on Rental Market			
Low Awareness of Rent Control Regulations	Increase awareness of Rent Control		
Potential For Demolition and new Development Activity	Designate North End as conservation district		
Overflow of Traffic Parking Problems	Develop parking policy. Address under-artery problem	\$150,000 for under-artery lot improvements	Improved parking; patron transportation; improvement to Government Center Garage
Increase in Bars And Restaurant Activity	Develop policy on bars and restaurants		

# G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
<u>HOUSING PROBLEMS</u>			
Large percent of units in need of major renovation	Develop comprehensive housing strategy to address particular needs of community:	H.I.P. \$100,000; 65 buildings	Housing program to address need of community home owner-occupied units
High cost of renovation; lack of financial assistance for owner-occupied buildings over 6 units; absentee-owned	1. Preservation of existing housing stock 2. Development of new housing where possible through rehabilitation and new construction	103 units of B.H.A. elderly 150 units of 236 elderly & 25 family units 30 units of 236 rehabilitation	
Economic inducements have encouraged conversion of family-size units to one & two bedroom units	3. Restrict variance for conversion of family units to small apartments 4. Establish ongoing community task force to develop housing strategies		
Increasingly tight housing market due to demand from new residents			
Limited community knowledge of issues Lack of organized effort			



G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
<u>SOCIAL CHANGE</u>			
Once homogeneous Italian community is becoming increasingly diversified in ethnic background, income levels and social behavior	Need analysis of socio-economic base of community increase community awareness of social change to facilitate acculturation process	Acquisition of North End Community Health Center (\$125,000)	Adult educational and vocational programs
Increasing evidence of teenage unrest and boredom	Detailed inventory of community's social service programs and capacities		Adolescent support programs and activities
Elderly population is in need of special medical supportive services	Develop constructive adolescent programs		Nursing care facility - land acquisition and construction or building rehabilitation

G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
<u>CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS</u>			
Streets & Side-	Improve pedestrian Improve signing	\$120,000 Waterfront Project improve- ments Atlantic Ave-Phase II \$1,000,000 Faneuil Market Streets 1,000,000 Utilities-Fulton/Commercial 1,500,000 Rowes/Foster Wharf 300,000 North End Park-Phase II 600,000 North Square Improvements 25,000 Prado 150,000 Copp's Hill Terrace 150,000 Waterfront Park 2,500,000 Long Wharf 400,000	Completion of necessary Waterfront renewal activi- ties: Long Wharf, Eastern Ave, McKinley Square, etc.
Utilities			
Parks & Recreation	Comprehensive Recreational Plan to complete area		
Parking Facilities	Substantially up- grade Government Center Garage; public transit link		Lights and necessary main- tenance of Government Center Garage
Commercial Center Needs	Commercial Revitali- zation Program uni- fied, active busi- nessmen's Association Parking Policy Study		Commercial Revitalization Program improved pedestrian access, improved street lights and parking availa- bility

G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
<u>CENTRAL ARTERY DEPRESSION STUDY</u>	Increase community involvement in plan- ning process		
Initiation of engineering feas- ibility	<u>COAST GUARD BASE</u>	Comprehensive plan to develop re-use strategy	Anticipate extensive utility and site improvements
Potential re-use of site should Coast Guard relo- cate			







M3/B16  
RA  
75/7  
pt. 12

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

DEPARTMENT

WORKING DRAFT  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

FOR  
COMMUNITY REVIEW

BMA-0162

ROSLINDALE

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June, 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION

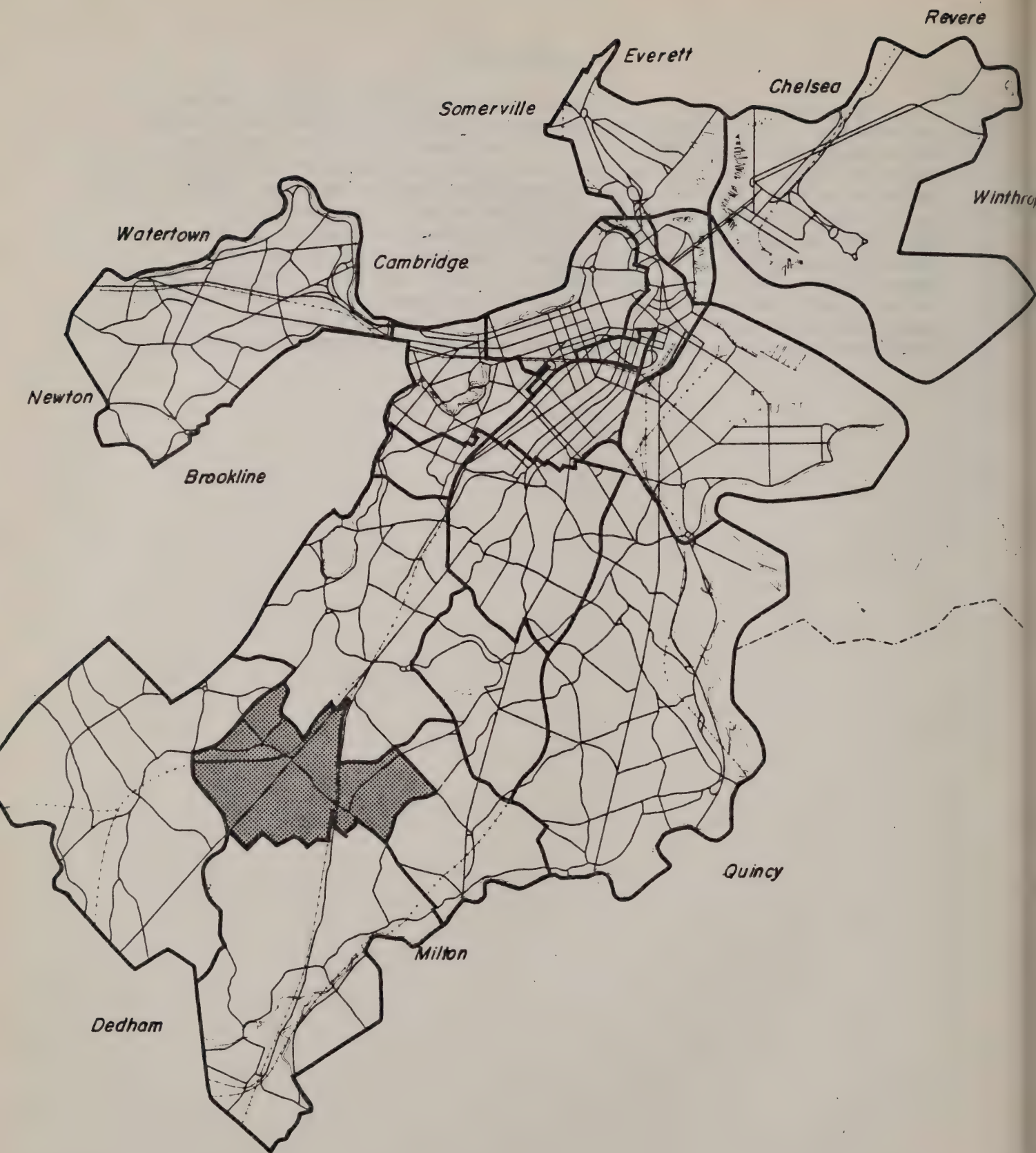
I.	BACKGROUND INFORMATION	3
A.	Short History	
B.	Existing Characteristics	
C.	Past Public Investment	
D.	Past Private Investment	
II.	PLANNING ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	13
A.	Changes in Roslindale Square	
B.	Housing Deterioration	
C.	Need for Capital Improvements and Public Facilities	
D.	Elderly Housing	
E.	Transit Development: Needham Branch	
III.	1975 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM	21
A.	Housing	
B.	Commercial Area Revitalization	
C.	Capital Investments	
IV.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS	22





## INTRODUCTION

This planning report, prepared by the Roslindale District Planner, is intended to assist local residents and City officials who are defining the needs of the Roslindale District. The report is divided into four major sections. The first section covers the background of the district including a short history, recent census data, and private and public construction activity during the past five years. The second part highlights a number of current physical planning and housing issues which concern residents in Roslindale. Preliminary strategies which address these issues are also suggested in this section. The third part of the report summarizes the 1975 public investment program for Roslindale; and finally the fourth section outlines public projects and activities which should be undertaken by the City or other governmental organizations.



ROSLINDALE



## I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### A. SHORT HISTORY

Before annexation to the City in 1873, Roslindale was part of West Roxbury and the Town of Roxbury. During the next three decades Roslindale underwent its greatest surge of development. The district gained enough people to be considered a community in itself although it was considered a part of West Roxbury.

The two railroads which trisect the district were extended to Roslindale during the 1870's. The New Haven Railroad's Washington Street Station opened in 1878. Boston's Street Railway System was extended south during this period from Forest Hills into the district.

Today Washington Street is still the district's major thoroughfare. The original Roslindale Village along Washington Street has become Roslindale Square, the modern day heart of the district. Commercial establishments and banks are concentrated in the Square, as well as the Post Office and Library. The Municipal Building, which houses the Little City Hall and the Greater Roslindale Health Service, was constructed in 1918.

### B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Located in the southwestern sector of the city and surrounded by West Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Hyde Park and Mattapan, the district is primarily residential in character having a number of very attractive neighborhoods.

The district's commercial center, Roslindale Square has been plagued by severe traffic congestion, the lack of convenient off-street parking and an inadequate mix of retail stores (there are no "magnet" or large variety goods establishments).

Washington Street, which extends north and south of Roslindale Square, is lined with houses and small businesses although the district's two housing projects are also close to Washington Street. The Archdale Project, constructed in 1951, contains 287 dwelling units and the Washington-Beech Streets Project, constructed in 1952, has 263 dwelling units.

In 1970, Roslindale's population was 32,911, representing a slight increase (4%) over 1960. Age patterns for Roslindale are similar to those in the City, although the district has a somewhat larger proportion of residents over 45 years old. Between 1960 and 1970 the proportion of age groups 0-4 and 25-64 declined, while age groups 5-24 and 65+ increased\*. This was similar to city-wide trends. In 1970, median family income was \$10,539, considerably above the City's \$9,133 median.

---

\* Roslindale has a large portion of low income elderly residents with 13% below the poverty level.





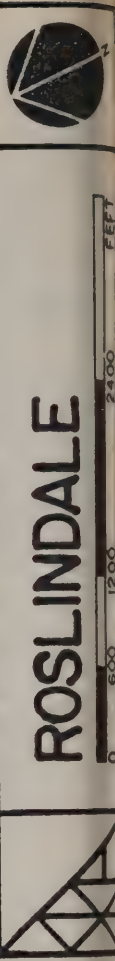
MT. HOPE

LOWER  
CENTRE-SOUTH WASHINGTON

METROPOLITAN HILL-BEECH

SUB-AREAS

ROSLINDALE



In 1970, Roslindale had 12,253 housing units, mostly in 1-2 family structures. Over 45% of the total units were owner occupied, compared to 27% in the City. The district's housing stock is moderately old, younger than the more urban neighborhoods but older than the more suburban areas. More than 90% of the units were built before 1939.

Only a small number of Roslindale's housing units (7-10%) are in deteriorating or delapidated condition, although within the Lower Washington area almost 40% of the structures surveyed by the Housing Inspection Department in 1970 required repairs over half between \$1,000 to \$3,500 each to reach minimum code standards. A number of these units are located near to the Southwest Corridor, where many houses are owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The following is a discussion of Roslindale's sub-areas:

1. Mt. Hope

Located in the eastern portion of the district, Mt. Hope includes all of the district's cemeteries and a well maintained residential community. It is bounded by Cummins Highway, the Penn Central Mainline Railroad, Neponset Avenue, Walk Hill Street and Boston State Hospital.

In 1970, the population of Mt. Hope was 3121, an increase of 17% from 1960. Mt. Hope contains a growing elderly population compared to the City.

Of the total 1,219 housing units counted in 1970, only 150 required repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. Slightly more than one half of the structures in Mt. Hope are owner-occupied.

The Roslindale Shopping Center along American Legion Highway and the Bradlee/Stop & Shop Center, a more modern center, at American Legion and Cummins Highways serves the commercial needs of the Mt. Hope area.

2. Lower Washington

Located in the central portion of Roslindale, the Lower Washington sub-area is bounded by the Penn Central tracks, the Arnold Arboretum, Washington Street, and Cummins Highway. In 1970, Lower Washington had a population of 7480, down 15% from 1960, primarily because of land taking in the Southwest Corridor right-of-way and some housing abandonment and demolitions in the vicinity of the Archdale public housing project and along Washington Street. This area along Washington Street also contains some marginal commercial establishments.

In 1970, there were 1740 dwelling units in Lower Washington. Based on a 1974 survey of all units within this area, approximately 40% of the units needed repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. This is particularly unusual considering the high owner occupancy rate (86%) in this area.



The Washington Street strip commercial stores and Roslindale Square's stores generally serve this area.

3. Centre-South

One of the more affluent areas of the City, Centre-South (which is adjacent to West Roxbury) had a 1970 median family income of \$12,000 and a population of 6,570, up 4% from 1960. Other boundaries are Centre Street, the Needham Branch Railroad, Roslindale Square and a portion of Washington Street.

Centre-South's population composition shows generally an older population with a higher proportion over 60 (26%) than the City. Of the 1995 housing units counted in 1970, only 70 required repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. Most structures in Centre-South are owner occupied.

Roslindale Square, on the eastern edge of this area, is plagued by problems associated with older neighborhood centers including traffic congestion, inadequate parking and the disappearance of retail establishments and chain stores.

4. Metropolitan Hill - Beech

Located in the southern portion of Roslindale, the Metropolitan Hill-Beech area is bounded by the Needham Branch Railroad, Cummins Highway, West Roxbury Parkway and Hyde Park. In 1970, Metropolitan Hill-Beech had a population of 15,740, up 10% from 1960, caused by the construction of High Point Village's 540 units in the late 1960's.

In 1970, 5525 dwelling units were counted in Metropolitan Hill-Beech, of which 410 (7%) required repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. 91% of the units in this area are owner-occupied.

The only housing deterioration in this area is near the Washington/Beech Streets Housing Project along Washington Street.

Roslindale Square and the High Point Village shopping center serve this area.



# Comparative Statistics - Roslindale

## 1970 U.S. Census Data

<u>Population</u>	<u>Mt. Hope</u>	<u>Lower Washington</u>	<u>Centre- South</u>	<u>Metropolitan Hill-Beech</u>	<u>ROSLINDALE DISTRICT</u>	<u>CITY</u>
Total 1970	3,269	7,480	6,570	15,740	32,911	639,803
Change from '60	+18%	-15%	+4%	+10%	+4%	-8%
Aged 15-19 yrs.-1970	224	493	574	1,352	2,643	60,900
Change from '60	+18%	+21%	-30%	+21%	+8%	+ 17%
Aged 20-24 yrs.-1970	312	371	465	1,160	2,308	76,958
Change from '60	+38%	+4%	-14%	+26%	+14%	+ 41%
Aged 65 yrs. & over-1970	579	751	1,413	2,010	4,630	81,437
Change from '60	+41%	-5%	0%	+14%	+13%	-5%
<u>Income</u>						
Median Family	NA	\$ 9,300- 10,100	\$12,000	\$10,100- 11,000	\$10,539	\$9,133
Families under \$5,000	NA	16%	6%	12%	NA	22%
<u>Housing</u>						
Total Dwelling Units	1,219	1,740	1,995	5,525	10,479	232,401
Units Needing Repairs in excess of \$1,000	150	600	70	410	1,220	67,102
Owner-Occupied Units	51%	86%	95%	91%	45%	27%
Mobility of Residents: People in same house over 5 years-1970	48%	65%	68%	65%	65%	50%

NA = Not Available

### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Since 1970, the major thrust of the City's Capital Improvement Program has been in strengthening neighborhoods through the construction and renovation of community facilities and parks, the reconstruction of streets and the replacement of sewer and water lines. The City spent \$870,500 on rehabilitation for the Haley Elementary School, \$510,233 for the Jennie L. Barron Elementary School, \$299,000 for the Archdale Recreation Building, and \$720,000 for the pool at Healy Field. During this period, three parks were also improved: (1) Fallon Field received \$125,000; (2) Healy Field-\$220,000; and (3) Parkman Playground-\$84,000. (See Public Facilities map). At the same time, there were over 90 streets reconstructed or resurfaced, 6 streets that had water and sewer line improvements, 8 streets with new sidewalks, 2 streets with new lighting, and one footway which was reconstructed. (See Public Improvements map)

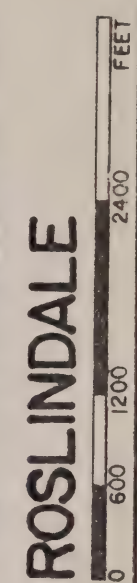




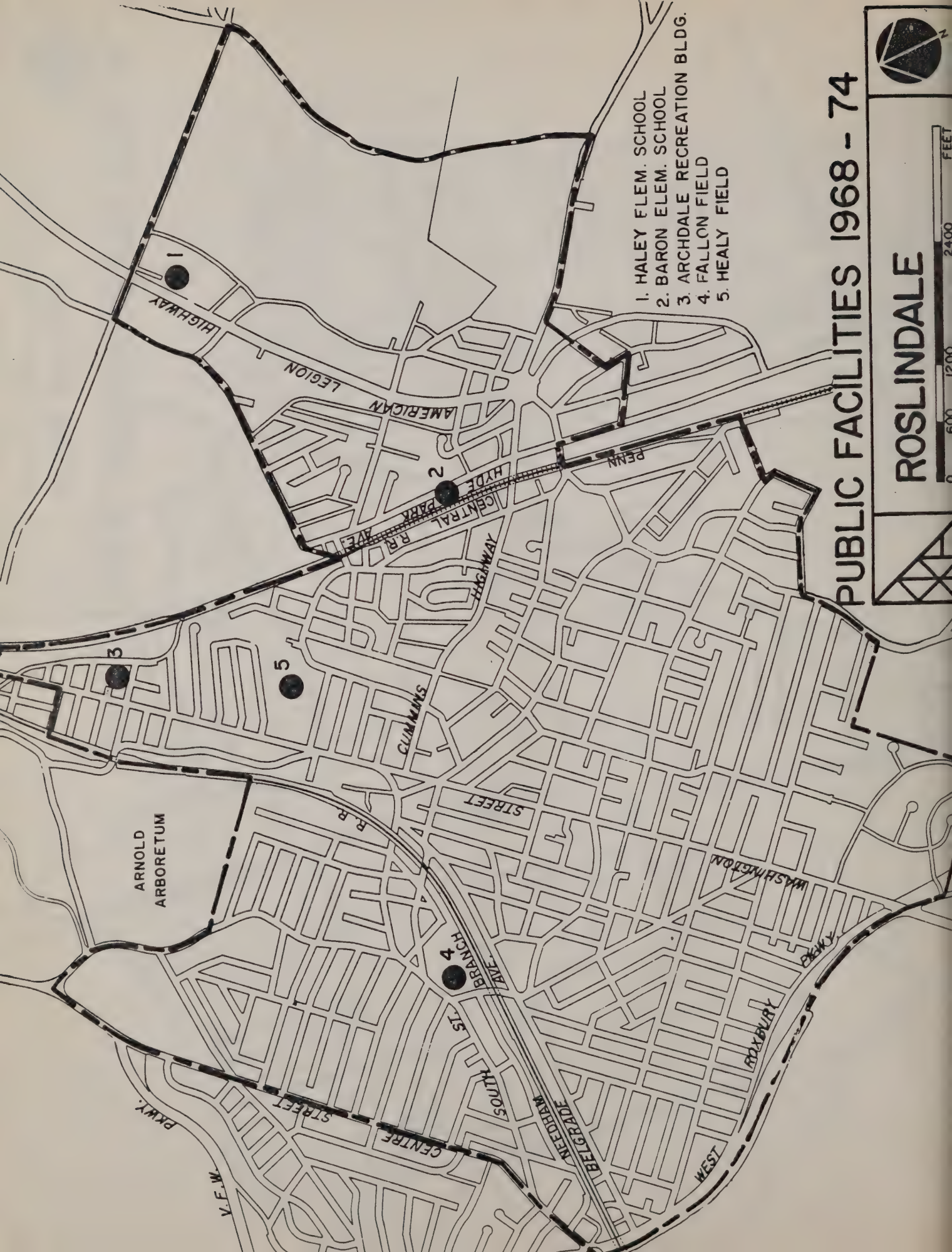
- STREET RESURFACING
- - - SIDEWALKS
- ..... SEWER & WATER
- . . . . LIGHTING

# PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1970-74

## ROSLINDALE







1. HALEY FLEM. SCHOOL
2. BARON ELEM. SCHOOL
3. ARCHDALE RECREATION BLDG.
4. FALLON FIELD
5. HEALY FIELD

## PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968 - 74

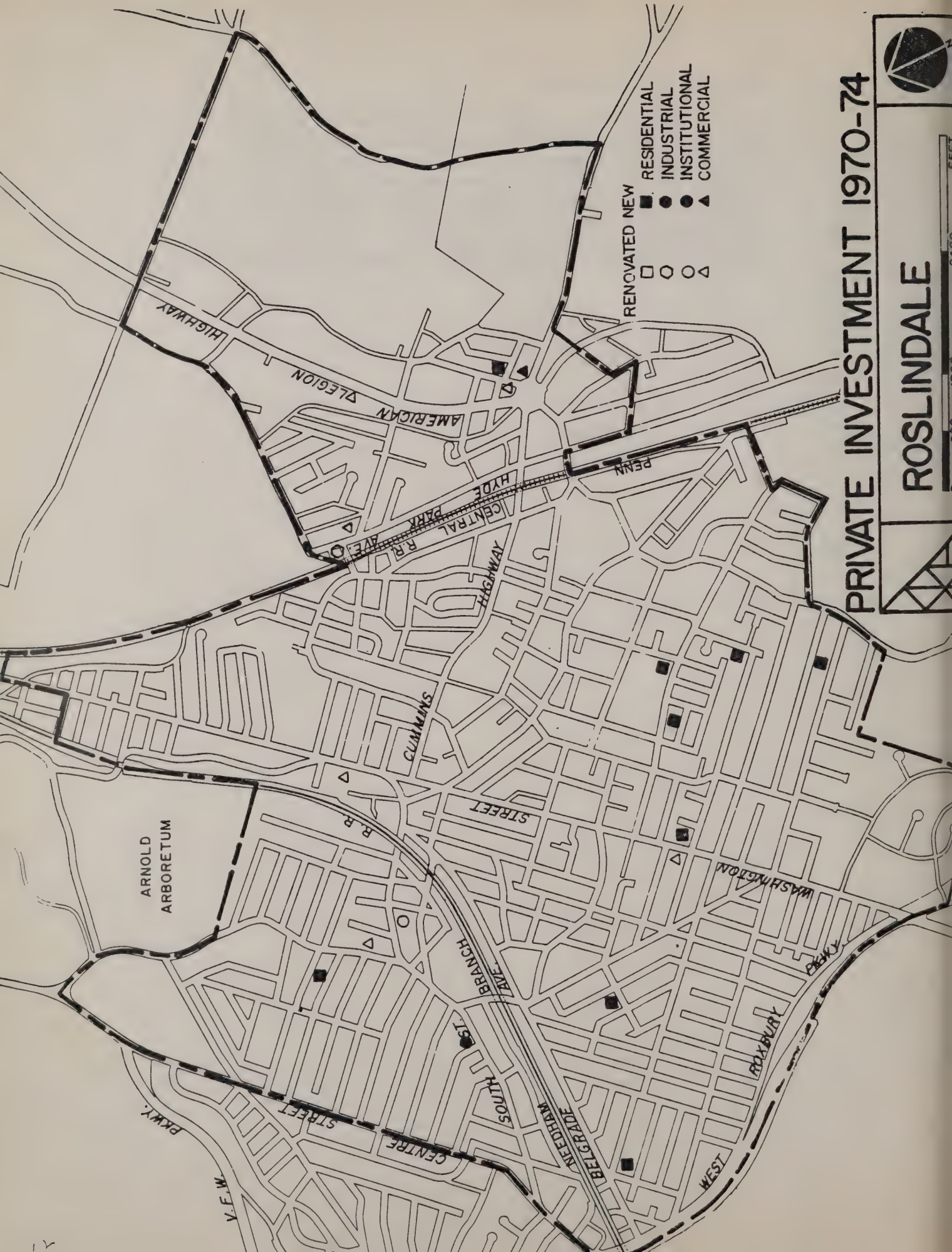
ROSLINDALE

0 500 1000 2000 2400 FEET

#### D. PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

A review of building permits for construction activity in excess of \$10,000 shows that there has been substantial residential and commercial construction in Roslindale from 1970 to the present time. New one-family residential construction has occurred along scattered residential streets throughout the district and commercial activity has focused on the district's major traffic arteries: Washington Street, Hyde Park Avenue, American Legion Highway and Centre Street.





PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1970-74

ROSLINDALE





## II. PLANNING ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

### A. CHANGES IN ROSLINDALE SQUARE

#### 1. Issues

Roslindale Square, at the crossroads of the southwestern part of the city, has shown signs of decline during the past decade. Increasing traffic congestion, the lack of convenient off-street parking, retail store turnovers to less desirable uses and the presence of blighting influences such as the vacant and decayed Rialto Theatre building have contributed to this decline. In addition, the right-of-way of the Needham Branch (Penn Central) Railroad continues to be an unattractive feature in the Square with a poorly maintained parking lot and accessory buildings in poor condition. Vandalism and store window breaks have also been a constant problem in the Square.

Because of these reasons, Roslindale Square has been unable to attract shoppers and has lost business to many of the outlying shopping centers such as Dedham Mall, American Legion Highway Center and West Roxbury.

#### 2. Strategies

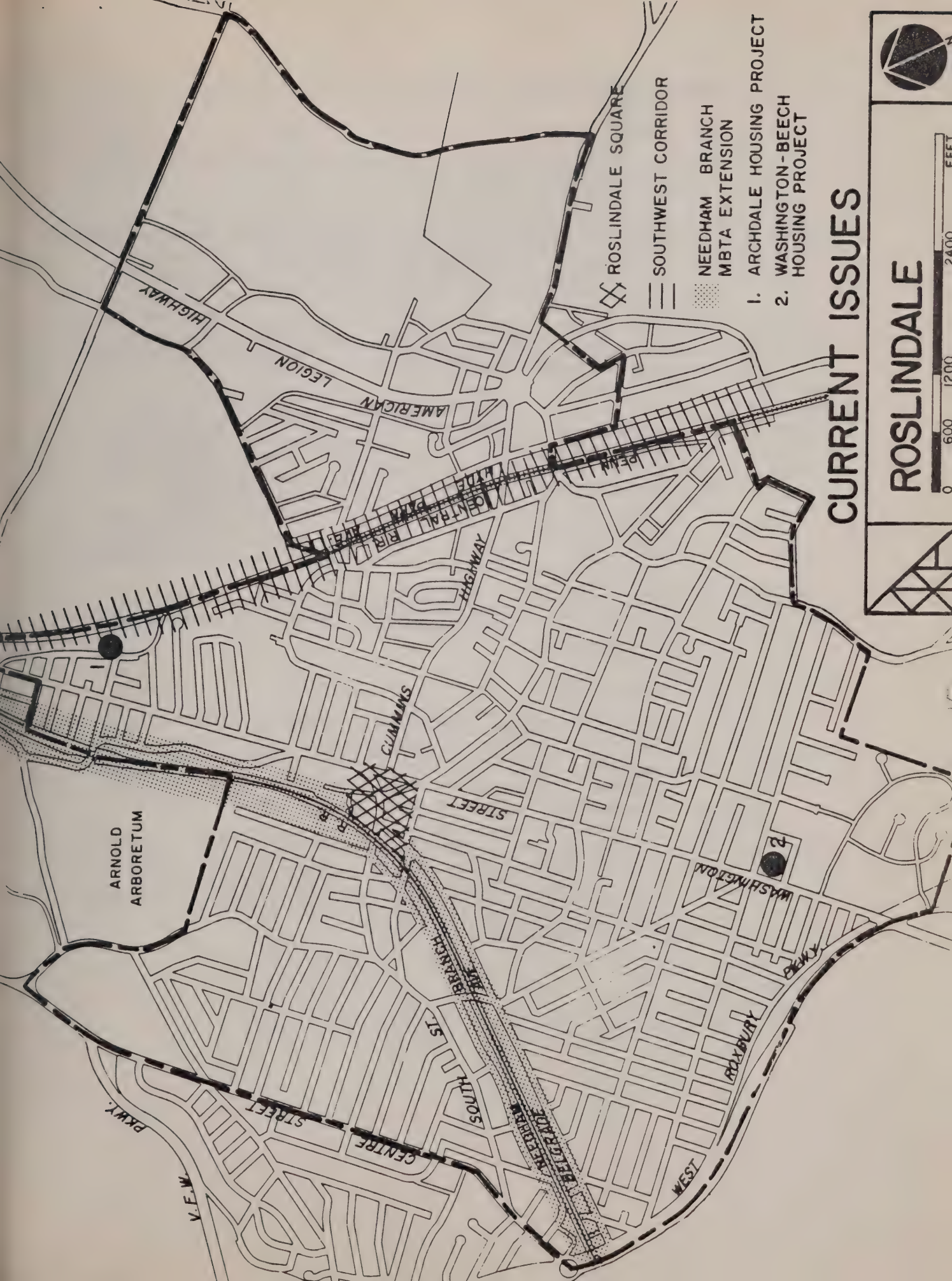
A major planning effort should be undertaken in cooperation with a strong Roslindale Square commercial organization to stimulate new business in the Square. In 1975, the City will make major improvements in the Square including the upgrading of the Taft Hill Parking Lot, improvements to Adams Park and demolition and acquisition of the Rialto Theatre and development of lot for extension of an off-street parking facility. However, more attention is needed to the Square's traffic and parking problems as well as using the extension of a transit line along the Needham Branch to attract new retail uses to the Square.

The City should develop storefront rehabilitation and off-street parking programs. Under the storefront program, merchants should be provided with incentives of a cash rebate to improve their storefronts. Under the parking program, if an appropriate parking site can be identified, the City should develop a new off-street parking area. The rear of commercial establishments along Corinth Street offers this off-street parking potential to Roslindale shoppers.

Traffic congestion can be approached in a number of ways including street widening, realigning or direction changes. To improve traffic problems associated with bus traffic in the Square, a study should be undertaken of the bus stop locations and scheduling of buses.

To reduce vandalism and crime in the square, a foot patrolman has been assigned by the Police Department to patrol the Square six days per week between 12 p.m. and 1 a.m. This program should be continued and expanded in future years.





ARNOLD  
ARBORETUM

V.F.W.

CENTRE  
STREET

SOUTH  
ST

BRANCH  
ST

CUMMINGS  
STREET

HIGHWAY

NEEDHAM  
BRANCH

WASHINGTON  
ST

WEST  
ST

ROXBURY  
PKWY

ROSLINDALE  
SQUARE

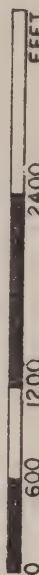
SOUTHWEST  
CORRIDOR

ARCHDALE  
HOUSING PROJECT

WASHINGTON-BEECH  
HOUSING PROJECT

# CURRENT ISSUES

ROSLINDALE





## B. HOUSING DETERIORATION

### 1. Issues

There are at least three areas in Roslindale where housing deterioration has been noted.

- Lower Washington: In this area, (once proposed for an intensive code enforcement program) there has been considerable disinvestment in the two and three family wood frame housing stock as well as a decline in the percentage of owner-occupants. The Archdale public housing project which has a number of boarded-up and vacant units has had a negative impact on this area. Mixed commercial uses, lack of street maintenance and crime have also had a negative impact.
- Southwest Corridor: In the Roslindale portion of the Southwest Corridor, there are abandoned and boarded-up houses as well as vacant land which is owned by the State Department of Public Works. Aside from the proposal for the construction of 119 elderly units by the Boston Housing Authority on a site along Cliffmont Street, the State has not returned this land to private hands which has led to a frustration in the nearby residential community.
- Metropolitan Hill: There has been some residential deterioration in this generally one and two family owner-occupied area.

### 2. Strategies

The City's Housing Improvement Program (HIP) should concentrate on the residential areas outlined above. In addition, the capital should be directed at street, sidewalk, sewer and water line and park improvements in these areas to increase the impact of the HIP Program.

In the Southwest Corridor, City and State efforts should work to return vacant land to residential uses, and to allow existing buildings to be sold. However, before final disposition of the land and buildings, proper maintenance by the State should be insured.

## C. NEED FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

### 1. Issues

Many of Roslindale's parks, streets and utilities are in need of replacement or repair. Specific park and re-creation issues include the lack of a tot lot and playground area at the Washington-Beech Public Housing project; the deterioration of Metropolitan District Commission's Cardillo Playground and expansion of Pagel Playground which poorly serves its local neighborhood.

There are a number of streets and bridges which should be upgraded in Roslindale including the Canterbury Street Bridge (including the intersection of Cliffmont and Canterbury Streets), Cummins Highway Bridge over the Penn Central tracks and residential streets scattered throughout the district. While the Roslindale High School has been programmed for rehabilitation, the need for a new High Point middle school has been critical for the last five years as has been the need to renovate the Irving School.

### 2. Strategies

Boston Redevelopment Authority projections indicate that Roslindale's population will remain stable at 40,000 people over the next decade. To insure this stability improvements are necessary to the district's parks, schools, streets, and water lines. A priority listing of capital improvement needs should be established and a program phased over the next five years. A priority will be the construction of the High Point Middle School, which must await clarification of the Phase II desegregation plan and the approval of final school district lines.

The strategy for improving MDC's Cardillo Playground should consider relocation of the facility to 457-485 Hyde Park Avenue, which is vacant and owned by the State Department of Public Works (within the Southwest Corridor). During neighborhood planning sessions with Southwest Corridor residents in Roslindale, there was an expressed desire for using the present Cardillo Playground site at the corner of Blakemore Street and Hyde Park Avenue as a commercial area and relocating the virtually abandoned open-space facility directly to the south. Since MDC may not be anxious to continue providing neighborhood parks, the City should consider developing this new facility.



## D. ELDERLY HOUSING

### 1. Issues

The housing needs of the elderly have generally been neglected over the years in Roslindale. Aged persons continue to pay a disproportionately high percentage of their (fixed) incomes for shelter, with a concomitant curtailment of expenditures for other essentials - including food, health care, clothing, transportation, etc. Elders are also living in physically inadequate dwellings and in undesirable environments such as in high crime areas, adjacent to nuisances (noise and air pollution) and far away from transit, shopping and community facilities.

In 1970, 15.3% of Roslindale's population was over 65 years compared to 12.8% in the City as a whole. The waiting list for Boston Housing Authority (BHA) elderly units is very long and it may take 2-3 years before someone on that list is placed in one of the City's housing developments. Roslindale does not have an exclusive BHA project for the elderly although a section of the Washington-Beech Project has been traditionally occupied by elderly tenants. Roslindale's senior citizens currently place their names on waiting lists for BHA projects for the elderly in Hyde Park, West Roxbury and other districts.

### 2. Strategy

During 1975 the Boston Housing Authority expects to begin construction on - 119 units of elderly housing along Cliffmont Street in the Southwest Corridor. Also, the Massachusetts Housing and Finance Agency will finance the conversion this year of 1 Conway Street to 28 elderly units. In subsequent years other sites should be considered for elderly housing because of the district's growing number of elders. If possible sites should be pursued near Roslindale Square to help in its revitalization.

## E. TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT: NEEDHAM BRANCH

### 1. Issues

Roslindale is located close to the end of the City's mass transit network, with connections to Forest Hills MBTA Station by bus service only. The proposed extension of the Orange Line along the Needham Branch Railroad from Forest Hills has been warmly accepted by most residents in Roslindale although there has been considerable discussion of the type of service (i.e. rapid transit v.s. upgraded commuter line) and the location of stations within Roslindale. Currently, City residents are working out agreements on the type of service with residents of Needham (where the line may terminate), and with MBTA's consultants (C.E. Maguire Associates), who are completing the Environmental Impact Report on the MBTA extension.



## 2. Strategies

The City, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and the Southwest Development Coordinator are working closely with local groups as well as with the MBTA and its consultants on the final determination of the type of service and station locations for the proposed extension line. This effort should terminate in the Fall, 1975, although work program delays may extend completion of the Environmental Impact report until the first part of 1976. At the same time, the BRA expects to be working closely with the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) on joint development studies at the various station stops in both Roslindale and West Roxbury. This effort should be underway in the summer of 1975.

The timetable for construction of the Needham Branch Extension Line requires at least one year in engineering-technical design after the completion and acceptance of the Environmental Impact Report by the State and Federal governments.



..... SODIUM VAPOR LIGHTING

- 1. GREATER ROSLINDALE HEALTH CENTER
- 2. OFF STREET PARKING LOT (INCL. DEMOLITION OF RIALTO/THEATRE)
- 3. ADAMS PARK
- 4. ROSLINDALE HIGH (RENOV.)
- 5. HEALY FIELD
- 6. FALLON FIELD
- 7. B.R.A. ELDERLY HOUSING
- 8. H.I.P. SITE OFFICE

# INVESTMENT PROGRAM 1975

## ROSLINDALE



### III. 1975 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1975 public investment program concentrates in three areas: housing, commercial area revitalization, and capital improvements.

#### A. HOUSING

The Housing Improvement Program (HIP) which provides incentives for rehabilitation of 1-6 unit owner-occupied structures, will be available throughout Roslindale and has funds for the rehabilitation of approximately 200 buildings (\$150,000). This program will include the opening of a site office in Roslindale Square (shared with West Roxbury) to administer the program.

New housing efforts include the construction of 119 units of elderly housing funded by the Boston Housing Authority at Cliffmont and Canterbury Streets.

#### B. COMMERCIAL AREA REVITALIZATION

The city's effort toward commercial area revitalization includes a number of improvements to Roslindale Square, as follows:

1. Installation of new sodium vapor lighting (Fall 1974;
2. Renovation of Taft Hill parking lot (80-spaces) including new lighting;
3. Demolition and acquisition of Rialto Theatre and development of lot for extension of off-street parking facility;
4. Installation of lights and benches in Adams Park; and
5. Rehabilitation of a portion of the Municipal Building for use as a neighborhood health center.

#### C. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The city's capital improvement program for Roslindale includes general rehabilitation of Roslindale High School, renovation of play equipment at Fallon Field and Healy Playfield; construction of a second baseball diamond for the Parkway Little League along Baker Street in West Roxbury; and reconstruction of Pagel Playground.



#### IV. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

It is important that public funds be used in future years to maintain the viability of Roslindale's residential neighborhoods. The areas for future public investment are outlined in a general manner below. These areas should be discussed and refined at neighborhood meetings during the coming months and specific recommendations made. The citizen participation process is critical to the selection of specific projects to be funded.

Future investment for housing should include the continuation of the City's Housing Improvement Program to provide for the rehabilitation of approximately 200 housing units annually. Modernization funds should be used to improve the Archdale and Washington-Beech Housing Projects. In addition, 100 units of elderly housing should be constructed in 1976 to respond to Roslindale's needs.

Housing investment in the Southwest Corridor should provide for improvements to existing houses and commercial structures boarded-up on Blakemore Street and Hyde Park Avenue.

Future capital investment needs include: (1) construction of the High Point Middle School; (2) addition to the Irving School; (3) relocation of MDC's Cardillo Playground; (4) replacement of bridges over the Penn Central mainline Railroad at Cummins Highway and at Canterbury Street; (5) construction of a tot lot at the Washington-Beech Housing Project; and (6) introduction of a systematic water pipe improvement program for Roslindale.

The City's efforts at revitalization of Roslindale Square should include: (1) develop a 50-100 space off-street parking facility in Corinth Street area; (2) initiate a feasibility study of commercial development possibilities adjacent to the proposed Roslindale Square MBTA station; (3) continue and expand foot patrolman in Roslindale Square; and (4) encourage merchants to rehabilitate their storefronts.

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Need for Capital Improvements and Public Facility	Establish priority listing to use capital expenditures to strengthen neighborhoods	Roslindale High (rehab)-in programming - \$6.6 million Health Center (Rehab of Municipal Bldg.)-\$76,500 Fallon Field 75,000 Healy Field- 75,000 Parkway Little League Second Base- 40,000 Baseball Diamond- 40,000 Pagel Playground- 35,000	New High Point Middle School Irving School Addition Relocation of MDC's Cardillo Playground Bridge Improvements: Cummins Highway Canterbury Street Tot lot (Washington-Beech Housing Project) Systematic water pipe improvement program
Changes in Roslindale Square	Organize strong business group		
	reduce traffic congestion		
	Develop new off-street parking	-Site development of Rialto Theatre lot for additional parking area \$60,000 -renovate Taft Hill parking lot- \$160,000	Develop a 50-100 space public lot in Corinth Street area
	Develop joint development options with Needham Branch Transit extension line	C.E. Maguire Environmental Impact Study of Needham Branch Extension for MBTA	Designating a small area redevelopment program in conjunction with MBTA Roslindale Sq. station
	Curb vandalism and crime	Lighting for Taft Hill Parking lot- \$25,000 Lighting program (Fall 1974) \$92,300 Installation of lights and benches in Adams Park \$30,000 Foot patrolman-6 days per week, two shifts	Continue and expand foot patrolman in Roslindale Sq.

FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Changes in Roslindale Square (cont.)	Eliminate blighting influences of HIP	Demolition and acquisition of Rialto Theatre- \$40,000	Demolish sheds in Needham RR. right-of-way
Housing deterioration	Preservation of stock HIP	HIP-\$150,000 (200 building) -open site office shared with West Roxbury	HIP-200 buildings each year
	Use capital expenditures to strengthen deteriorated neighborhoods		Fund needed projects in areas which have utilized HIP
	Return Southwest Corridor land to city and private interest	119 units of BHA elderly housing at Cliffmont Street	HIP to assist in rehab of these homes
Elderly Housing	Encourage new elderly development both public and private	119 units of BHA elderly housing along Cliffmont St. 28 units of MHFA elderly (renovated) housing at 1 Conway St.	At least 100 additional, low income elderly units are needed in 1976
Public Transportation Improvements Needham Branch MBTA Line	Establish guidelines for type of service to be introduced into Roslindale		Pending completion of Environmental Impact Statement
	Establish guidelines for joint development possibilities at station locations		Pending completion of Environmental Impact Statement







92-B-4422

M3/B16  
RA  
75/7  
pt. 13

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS  
DEPARTMENT  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

WORKING DRAFT  
FOR  
COMMUNITY REVIEW

ROXBURY

Background Information, Planning Issues  
and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.	SHORT HISTORY	[3]
B.	EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	[5]
C.	PAST PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT	[9]
D.	ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	[14]
	1. Housing	
	2. Commercial Center Decline	
	3. Crime	
	4. Jobs	
	5. Transportation	
E.	1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[19]
F.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS	[21]
G.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS AS RELATED TO ISSUES, STRATEGIES AND 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[22]





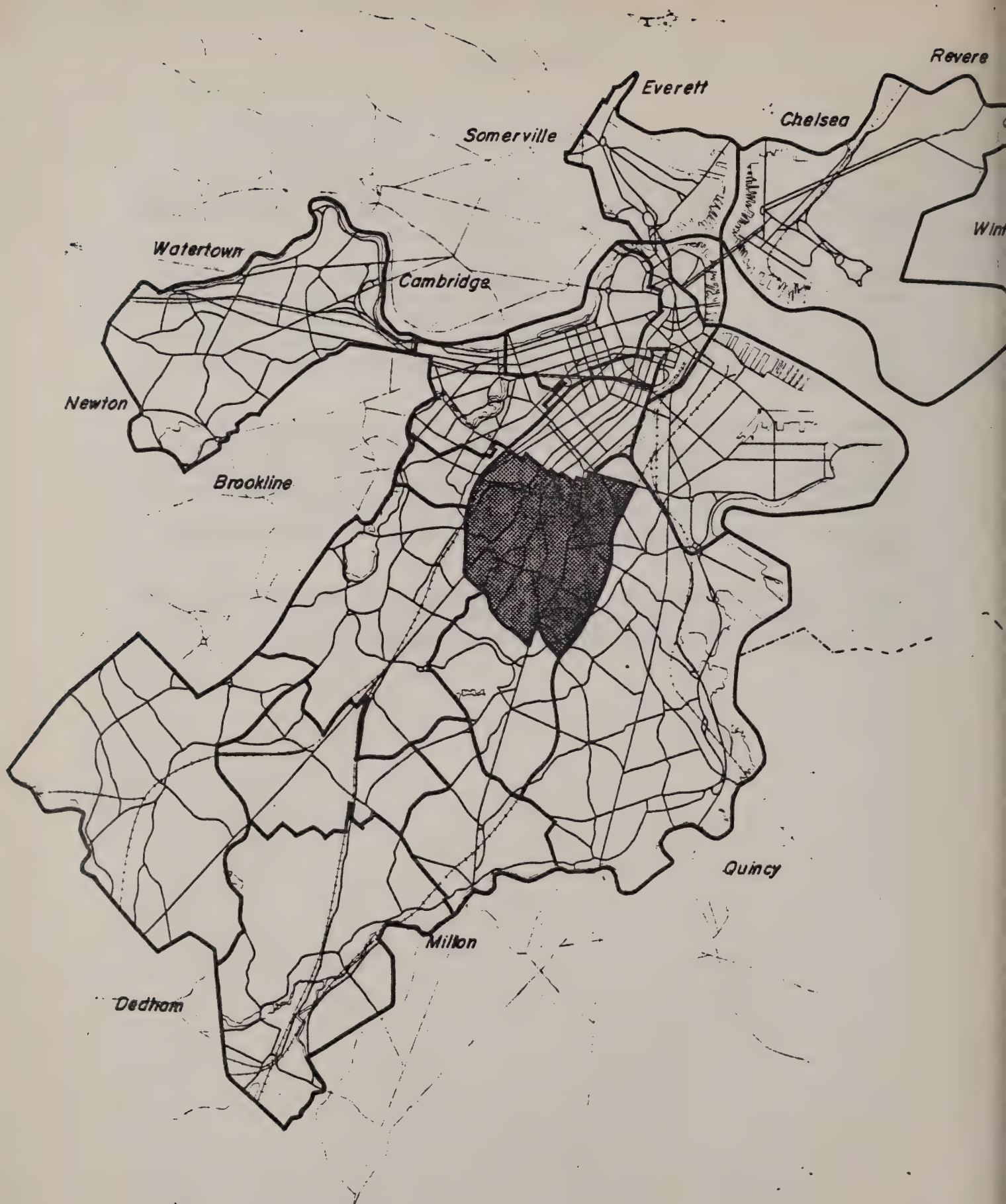
## INTRODUCTION

This report prepared by the Roxbury District Planner is a draft document meant to form the basis of discussion among residents and City representatives on planning strategies and investment needs.

Towards this end, it establishes a base of population, income and housing data as well as a listing and analysis of recent past public and private investment in Roxbury. This information can be used by the District Planner and others who are involved in the planning process, neighborhood residents, Little City Hall Staff and other City agencies and departments.

Second, it offers an analysis of the major issues which confront the community along with recommended strategies. These strategies should form the basis of discussion for community residents for the Community Development Block Grant and Capital Improvement participation process as well as for involvement in issues which are not addressed by City expenditure such as rezoning, private development or State-funded Programs.

Third, the report recognizes that strategies are not self-fulfilling and makes recommendations for investments, both public and private, which are necessary to help carry through the recommended strategies.



ROXBURY





## A. SHORT HISTORY

The town of Roxbury was founded by 1630. Roxbury village lay at the edge of the hilly farmland connected to Boston by a narrow neck stretching between Back Bay and South Cove. In the early 1800's summer houses and country estates were built in the highlands by Boston's wealthy families.

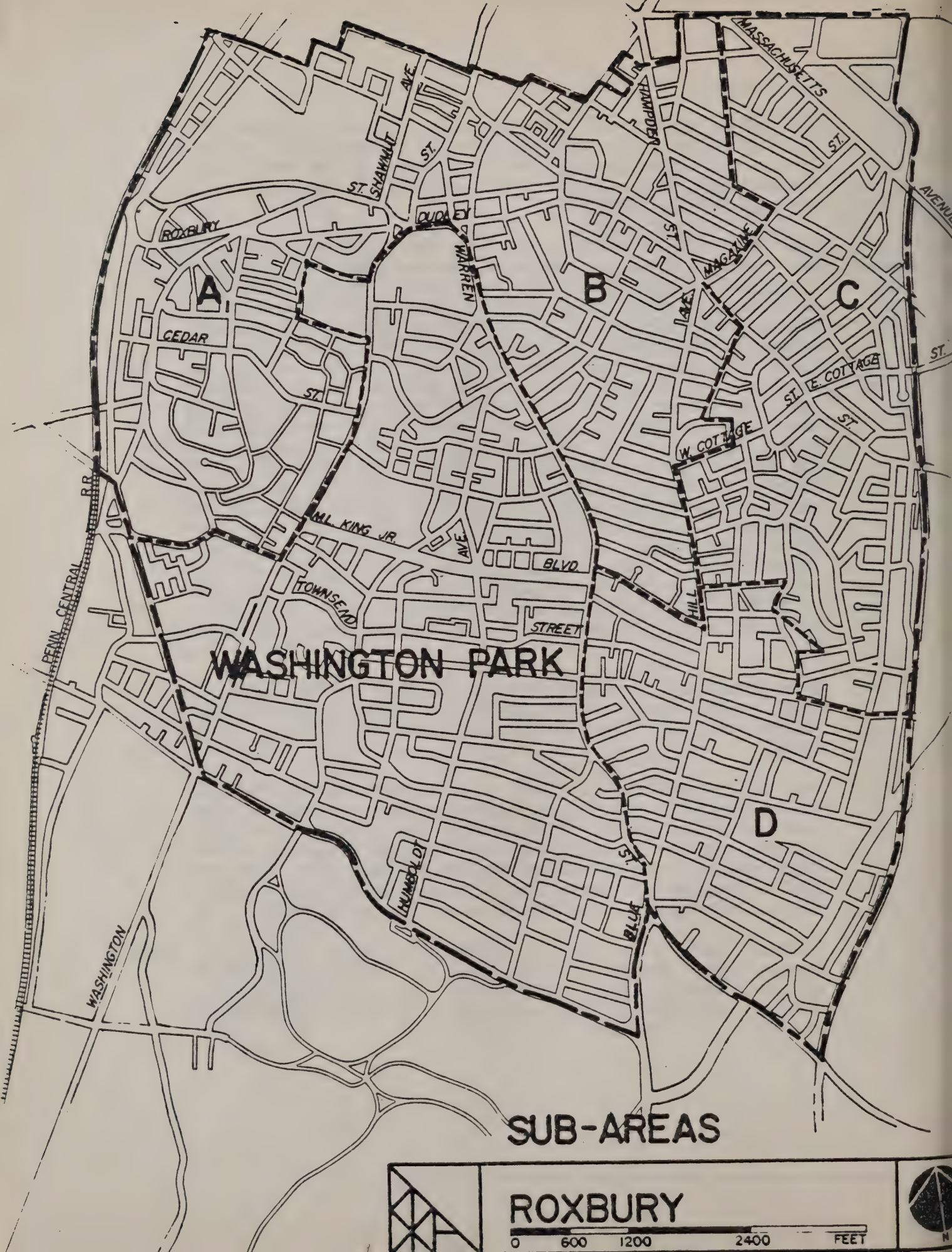
The first major development was from 1840 to 1870, when less expensive versions of Boston townhouses and detached single and two family houses were constructed along Dudley Street. The majority of residential development, however, took place between 1870 and 1900 as streetcar service was extended to the area and the bays between Roxbury and Boston were filled. The steeper central highlands area, between Washington Street and Blue Hill Avenue, was developed less densely and became the home of the more affluent families. Houses increased in size as they approached Franklin Park. The surrounding areas were developed with more moderately priced housing such as triple-deckers especially around the turn of the century. While Roxbury highlands remained primarily an affluent residential district during the 19th century, lower Roxbury became the site for a number of light industrial establishments as well as a residential district for the lower - middle income population which was expanding into Roxbury from Boston in the early 1900's as Jewish families moved into the southern area replacing earlier residents who were predominantly Irish. At about the same time black families first moved into the northern area. The black community gradually expanded into the southern area after World War II.

During the 1940's and 50's there was a significant migration of lower income blacks from the south. In 10 years, the area completely reversed its social composition from 70% white to 70% non-white.

Most housing constructed in the area had been completed by 1920. But by the 1950's housing deterioration became evident in large sections of the district although many areas, notably in Upper Roxbury, remained in good condition. By 1960 community leaders began work on a revitalization process for Washington Park and in 1963 Washington Park became the first residential rehabilitation project undertaken by the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

Although there is a dynamic middle class group residing in Roxbury today, the Roxbury Highlands, the Tremont Street district and lower Roxbury remain for the most part as run down areas. Physical deterioration has been especially severe in the old districts of lower middle class building.





# WASHINGTON PARK

## SUB-AREAS

ROXBURY

0 600 1200 2400 FEET





## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

### AREA A

Highland Park or Area A is a predominantly black neighborhood, although a quarter of the population is white -- divided between mostly older homeowners who have been in the neighborhood all their lives and a much smaller number of newer white homeowners who have been attracted by the housing stock (the neighborhood has some of the best historic houses in the area). The population is older than in the area as a whole, both white and black.

Incomes in the neighborhood are close to those in the whole area -- about a third of the households below \$3,000, another third between \$3,000 and \$6,000 and the remaining third above \$6,000. As in Area A, most of the lowest income households are one or two persons, predominantly elderly people, and the higher-income households are primarily families of three or more. Household sizes are about the same as in the area as a whole.

The vacancy rate in the neighborhoods' housing is higher than that of the whole area -- slightly more than a third of all units are vacant. Housing is in somewhat worse condition, too, with almost a third of all the buildings in need of major repair, compared to a fifth in the whole Roxbury area. The sizes of buildings -- in terms of number of units per structure -- tends on the average to be smaller. There are slightly more one-family houses and 3-4 unit structures, and somewhat fewer large apartment buildings.

### AREA B

The racial composition of the population is generally the same as the Model City area as a whole, except for a large and fast-growing Spanish-speaking community.

There appear to be two distinct neighborhoods with planning Area B, generally divided by Moreland Street. Between Moreland and Maywood Street, the predominantly black population is middle-income with many long-term residents and a relatively high rate of homeownership; housing is in better condition than in the rest of the area or in Roxbury as a whole. Above Moreland Street, the Spanish-speaking community has recently begun to expand along Dudley Street. The area is dominated by the Orchard Park housing project, which houses a quarter of the area's families. The white population is mostly older homeowners, scattered throughout the area.

The area has a slightly older population than the Roxbury area as a whole. More of the families are large, with six or more people, but there is also a larger proportion of one and two-person households. Incomes are lower than in the district due in large part to the presence of Orchard Park. Almost half of the area's households are below \$3,000, and more than four-fifths are below \$6,000. Most of the Families with children have low incomes.

The area has more large buildings, with five or more units, although this too reflects Orchard Park. Housing overall is in somewhat better condition, particularly the area below Moreland Street.

#### AREA C

The white population is somewhat larger than in other areas (with the exception of Area A) -- two fifths as opposed to one-third. The Spanish-speaking families compose one-tenth of the population and black families account for half the people. The population is younger than in other neighborhoods -- more children and fewer elderly households.

Incomes are lower than in the whole of Roxbury but unlike other areas, aggregate figures are not pulled downward by small elderly households with very low incomes. Rather, families of three to five people have lower incomes here -- more than two-fifths are below \$3,000, and four-fifths are below \$6,000.

The housing stock is in slightly better condition than in the Roxbury area as a whole, probably reflecting the slightly higher rate of long-term family owners (by contrast to elderly owners in other planning areas who have difficulty maintaining homes on limited incomes). More of the units here are in 3-4 unit buildings, and fewer in larger apartment structures. About a quarter of the units are vacant, the same proportion as in the whole Roxbury area.

#### AREA D

The neighborhood significantly departs from other areas in being predominantly black, with very small white and Spanish components in the population. The population is considerably younger than in most other areas, and families are larger. There are some older white households, but they are few. More of the black population is composed of older residents than in other areas.

The overall income distribution of the area's population is about the same as for the Roxbury area as a whole, but there are some significant differences within the distribution. As in Area C, more of the families with children have lower incomes and the smaller households account for most of those with incomes above \$6,000. More than 85% of the families with three to five persons are below \$6,000, and virtually all of the families with six or more people are under \$6,000. More than half of the area's families receive welfare assistance of some kind, and two-thirds of those receive AFDC payments -- a higher proportion than in any other sub-area.



The neighborhood's housing generally reflects conditions of the district. A little more than a fifth of the units are vacant. A somewhat larger proportion of the structures are in need of minor repairs, but the same proportion as in the whole area are in good condition. Buildings are larger on the average and 25% of all the units are in buildings with 5 or more units.

#### WASHINGTON PARK

The area delineated by the Washington Park Urban Renewal Project covers an area of 502 acres. It is bounded by Washington, Dudley, Warren and Townsend Streets.

From 1960 - 1970 total population declined in Washington Park by 23% to 20,000. The elderly population in the Washington Park area declined in the 60's by almost 30%, compared to about 40% for Roxbury as a whole.

Median income for Washington Park is just under 7,000, higher than for Roxbury as a whole. Only one-third of the families in the Washington Park area has income under \$5,000.

Physically, Washington Park is quite diverse with well maintained older residential areas near Franklin Park, new housing constructed under the renewal program in the center, and the Dudley Station commercial area near Lower Roxbury. Sixteen percent of dwelling units in Washington Park are owner occupied.

# Comparative Statistics - Roxbury

1970 U.S. Census

<u>Population</u>	<u>Area A</u>	<u>Area B</u>	<u>Area C</u>	<u>Area D</u>	<u>Wash. Park</u>	<u>Total District</u>
Total 1970	6,480	9,695	9,495	10,924	20,081	56,675
Change from '60	-42%	-27%	-25%	-24%	-23%	
Total Black -						
1970	4,595	7,276	4,548	10,159	18,323	44,901
Change from '60	-25%	50%	91%	19%	3%	
<u>Youth</u>						
Aged 15-19 yrs.						
1970	554	918	872	948	1,660	4,952
Change from '60	-29%	-5%	-8%	1%	7%	
Aged 20-24 yrs. -						
1970	522	749	717	974	1,731	4,693
Change from '60	-19%	-12%	-18%	3%	3%	
Aged 65 yrs. &						
Over 1970	861	860	875	664	1,931	5,191
Change from '60	-37%	-39%	-30%	-52%	-32%	
<u>Income</u>						
Median Family	5,937	5,741	6,350	6,569	6,937	
% Families Under						
\$5,000	43%	44%	39%	37%	33%	
<u>Housing</u>						
Total Dwelling						
Units	2,724	3,323	3,218	3,866	6,957	20,088
Owner Occupied						
Units	15.5%	15.4%	22.5%	19%	16.3%	17.5%
Mobility of Residents						
Residence Over						
5 Years	39%	35%	43%	36%	29%	

### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Since 1963, \$69.1 million have been spent in Washington Park including street and sidewalk reconstruction, street lighting, sewer and water utility construction, 5 parks and playgrounds, land assembly costs for new construction, the Trotter School, Grove Hall Library, Police Station and Court House at the Roxbury Civic Center.

1,249 units of housing were constructed, financed by federal 221d3 or 236 housing programs. Another 271 units of elderly housing were constructed by the Boston Housing Authority. Another 1,100 units were rehabilitated primarily using Section 312 grants.

In addition, there has been a significant number of leased housing units allocated throughout Roxbury, with a concentration in Upper Roxbury. The renewal project at Kittredge Square, budgeted for \$2.3 million has spent \$200,000 primarily for utility work. The Brunswick-King project has spent \$175,000 on capital improvements of a total budget of \$1.3 million.

### PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

Private residential development in Roxbury over the past few years has been scattered throughout the community. A review of building permits indicates that the greatest activity has occurred in the Highland Park area. Most of the development here involves rehabilitation of existing units rather than new construction.

A number of commercial establishments have been rebuilt along Warren Street between Dudley and Whiting Streets, and along Norfolk Avenue and Shirley Streets in the northeast.

There has been some recent institutional development, particularly of medical facilities, along Dudley Street, Mt. Pleasant Street and Dimock Street. A few educational facilities in the Washington Park area are in the process of being rehabilitated.

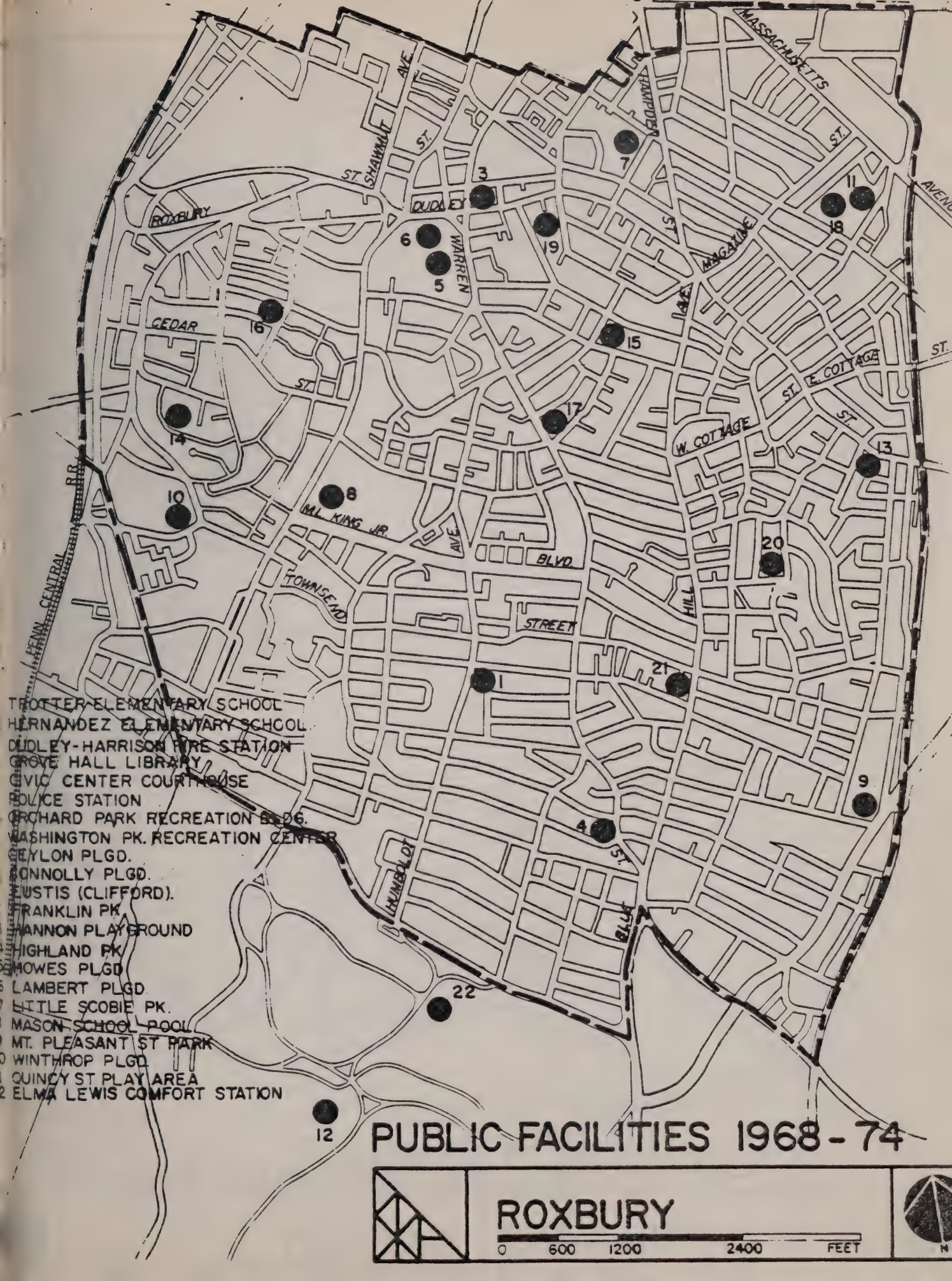




PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1968-74

ROXBURY





- TROTTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- HERNANDEZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- DUDLEY-HARRISON FIRE STATION
- GROVE HALL LIBRARY
- CIVIC CENTER COURTHOUSE
- POLICE STATION
- ORCHARD PARK RECREATION BLDG.
- WASHINGTON PK. RECREATION CENTER
- CEYLON PLGD.
- CONNOLLY PLGD.
- EUSTIS (CLIFFORD).
- FRANKLIN PK.
- HANNON PLAYGROUND
- HIGHLAND PK.
- MOWES PLGD.
- LAMBERT PLGD.
- LITTLE SCOBIE PK.
- MASON SCHOOL POOL
- MT. PLEASANT ST PARK
- WINTHROP PLGD.
- QUINCY ST PLAY AREA
- ELMA LEWIS COMFORT STATION

PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968 - 74

**ROXBURY**

0 600 1200 2400 FEET





# HOUSING PROGRAMS 1968-74

# ROXBURY





PENN. CENTRAL  
R.R.

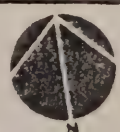
RESIDENTIAL  
COMMERCIAL  
INSTITUTION  
INDUSTRIAL

NEW  
REHAB.

PRIVATE INVESTMENT

ROXBURY

0 600 1200 2400 FEET





## D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

### 1. HOUSING DETERIORATION

#### Issue

Because of the low percentage of units which are owner occupied in Roxbury, the Housing Improvement Program would have only limited impact on Roxbury's housing stock as a whole. Other strategies must be employed to provide for improvement of the majority of the stock and prevention of further blight to areas where housing is still in reasonably sound condition.

In addition to the desire for improvement in the physical condition of their homes, there is a long-standing unmet desire among the people of the area to own their own homes. A local survey indicated that 75% of the tenants in the area definitely are interested in ownership. Not unlike other Americans, their preference is for single family detached houses. Unfortunately, relatively few such structures exist in the area. There is good evidence to believe that ownership promotes neighborhood stability, community pride and a high level of property maintenance. Those neighborhoods which are most stable and where homes are in the best condition are invariably those where the proportion of resident-owned structures is high. Although ownership is no panacea for the physical problems of Roxbury, it has sufficient promise to warrant inclusion as a central objective of the physical program.

However, obstacles to the revitalization of the area's housing are great. They include:

1. Reluctance of financial institutions to make loans to area residents.
2. Poor credit backgrounds of families needing financial aid for property improvement.
3. Downpayment requirement beyond the means of many families desiring to become owners.
4. Red-lining of the area by property insurance companies, which further compounds the difficulty of obtaining mortgage financing.
5. Excessive property tax burdens in the area.
6. Inadequate housing services for residents of the area, and
7. Hesitancy of housing developers to build or improve housing in the area because of a property assembly problem, government red-tape, and low profit margins.

## Strategy

The rehabilitation of the Roxbury community is dependent on the eventual transfer of the majority of property from absentee owners to owners who reside in the community. Ownership must be transferred to people who will be owner occupants of individual structures and community based groups who will concentrate on rehabilitation and development of designated areas. A process of municipal "land banking" which would hold tax delinquent properties and convey them to community residents, or in the case of large development parcels to local groups is also necessary.

Now that disclosure has been mandated by the State Banking Commissioner, community residents and the City should begin working with banks to channel investment money into the Roxbury area.

More specifically, the Housing Improvement Program should be targeted in those areas where owner occupancy is high and the boarding and demolition of abandoned buildings should continue. Those abandoned buildings which can be saved should be rehabilitated if it is economically feasible to do so. Potential development sites exist in many parts of the community and should be pursued through local development groups.

## 2. COMMERCIAL AREA DECLINE

### Issue

The Dudley Station area in Roxbury has been a major transportation mode and shopping area for the surrounding neighborhood.

Dudley Station attracted a significant number of shoppers at one time. However, traffic congestion, lack of parking, security problems, storefront obsolescence, the shift of white merchants to the Mattapan-Codman Square area, decreasing attractiveness of the neighborhood in recent years, has led to some decline in the commercial viability of the Dudley area. The absence of a strong unified image has been cited as one of the area's major problems.

Most commercial uses in the Dudley area are concentrated along Washington Street and on Dudley Street. In addition, there are a few commercial establishments along secondary streets in the shopping district. While many of the structures occupied by commercial users are basically in good condition, some buildings are in need of major repairs.

Working jointly, district planners, the Mayor's Office, Dudley Merchants Association have completed Phase I of a planning program. This will include the rehabilitation of the city's



parking lot located at Shawmut Avenue and Ruggles Street scheduled for this year and commercial lighting program now under construction. In addition, street improvements under the Washington Park Urban Renewal Program are in design for sections of Washington Street; -- the City will soon begin construction of the Roxbury Branch of the Boston Public Library and the MBTA will soon rehabilitate Dudley Station and paint the elevated structure on Washington Street.

### Strategy

Basic to the revitalization of Dudley Station is the continued cooperative involvement of the City and the Dudley Merchants Association. In the coming year work should focus on specific streetscape and pedestrian improvements, expansion of police patrols, a storefront rehabilitation program and upgrading of vacant buildings and lots in the area.

### GROVE HALL

#### Issue

The Grove Hall Development Council has been in process of trying to upgrade the Grove Hall shopping area along Blue Hill Avenue. Along with the Grove Hall Development Council, the Nation of Islam (Black Muslims) have brought new commercial life to the area with their market, restaurant, bakery, and real estate concern. An application for Urban Systems Street Improvements has been submitted to the Federal Government; and should be in design this year.

Roxbury Community College has recently moved from the area, leaving its old facility vacant.

#### Strategy

The City should continue its work with the Grove Hall Development Council and monitor the progress of the Urban Systems Application and the off-street parking lot across from the library should be re-designed and opened to help serve the businesses better. In addition, a storefront rehabilitation program is needed.

### 3. UNEMPLOYMENT

#### Issue

Unemployment is a chronic problem in the Black community where rates are two to three times the City's.

With recent economic developments, employment opportunities for Blacks in the community and elsewhere have decreased severely. The current recession which has affected the City

and metropolitan area has struck particularly hard at the Roxbury community.

Fluctuations in the job market have always been keenly felt in Black communities. Roxbury is no exception.

#### Strategy

One way to help stabilize the employment situation for Roxbury residents is to establish more jobs within the community itself. Construction stimulated by public and private housing development in the area can have a major employment impact. Minority construction firms have good track records, but have had only limited opportunities in the area. Their needs to be a more equitable arrangement for awarding public construction contracts both in Roxbury and the City as a whole.

The minority developer must continue to solicit and receive support from local minority lending institutions. Also, the minority developer must seek new interests outside of his initial base of operations, to further increase the flow of money back to his neighborhood.

### 4. CRIME

#### Issue

Crime is a major issue in Roxbury and is closely related to drugs. The community has suffered from the problem longer than other sections of the metropolitan area. The addict population is larger than anywhere else; and the property crimes associated with drug addiction are probably more widespread than elsewhere.

An unpublished research study undertaken by the Massachusetts Drug Addict Rehabilitation Board has shown that, of 2,272 illegal drug users currently in prisons and jails, public and private hospitals, or under the care of a private doctor, 12% are from Roxbury and North Dorchester, (that former section of Model Cities, now in the Roxbury Planning Area). This is the highest concentration of known addicts in the state. Most law enforcement and treatment professionals agree that district distrust of medical facilities by the Black addict and greater concern for White, middleclass addicts by the police and medical practitioners has produced a consistent under representation of Black drug users in all analyses of known drug users.

The high incidence of muggings and other street crimes, car theft, etc., is perpetrated by youths.



### Strategy

Programs for both drug related criminal and youthful offenders need to be developed through community organizations. Increased police protection in high crime areas is necessary to provide residents with a sense of security within their own homes and neighborhoods.

## 5. TRANSPORTATION

### Issue

The major transportation issue in Roxbury deals with the unresolved use of the Southwest Corridor and, the relocation of the Orange Line MBTA Route. Diverting the Orange Line away from the Dudley Station area, as is currently proposed, could have considerable impact on the area.

The Southwest Corridor Coalition is attempting to acquire certain parcels of land in the Jackson Square area of the Southwest Corridor. Plans for the use of these parcels remain tentative, although their development into a commercial center has been contemplated. There are policy and impact questions which remain unanswered such as the effects on neighboring residential congestion.

### Strategy

Planning activities with the Southwest Corridor Coalitions must be coordinated more closely with the City and specific studies should be conducted as to the impact of the relocation of the Orange Line on Dudley Station.

## 6. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

### Issue

Although many sections of Washington Park have received considerable Capital Improvements over the past decade, there are many areas which have inadequate street lighting, low water pressure, blocked sewers and pot-holed streets.

### Strategy

Over the next few years, a concerted effort should be made to coordinate street lighting and utility improvements with housing rehabilitation or construction activities in Roxbury such as the southwestern section of Washington Park from Humbolt to Washington Street, the area near RAP-UP-III, in the SAV-MOR area, Mount Pleasant and South of Dudley Street, east of Blue Hill Avenue.

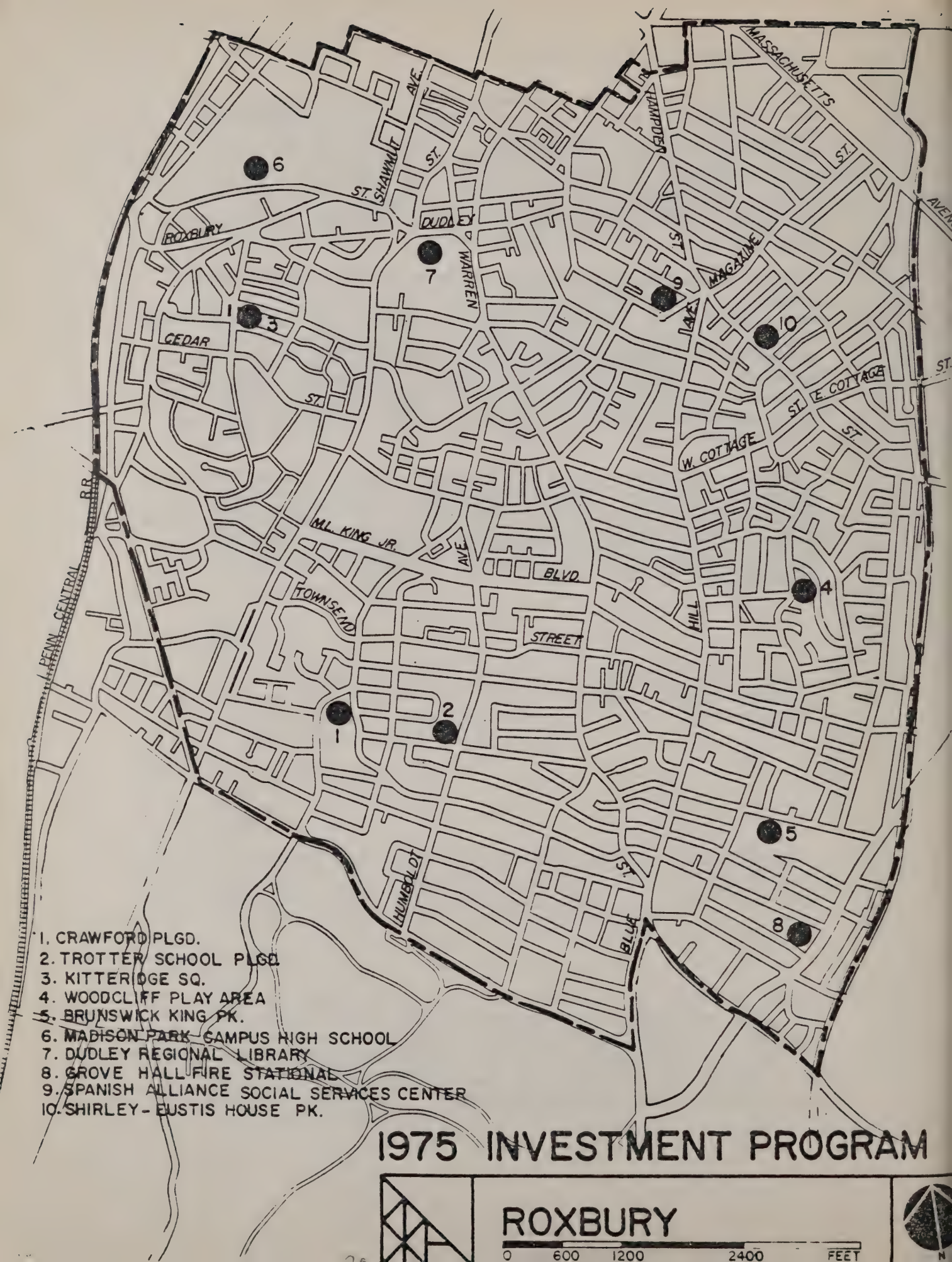


E. 1975 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1975 Public Investment Program centers around housing, commercial district revitalization and capital improvements. The Housing Improvement Program, which provides incentives for rehabilitation of 1-6 unit owner-occupied dwellings, will be available throughout the entire district. The funding for this program covers approximately 225 buildings in Roxbury. The demolition of about 200 abandoned and unsafe structures has been planned with a budget of over a half million dollars.


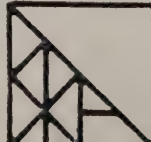
Commercial Center revitalization efforts for 1975 are focussed around the Dudley Station area. Plans for resurfacing of the municipal parking lot at the corner of Shawmut and Ruggles Streets, lighting improvements through the Lighting Program, addition of pedestrian crosswalks, landscaping, and street furniture have been approved. The widening of Warren Street, which intersects Dudley Street in the commercial district, is about to get underway. This will eventually provide for a freer flow of traffic through the Dudley Station area.

Capital investments in the 1975 program include the construction of the Dudley Regional Library, Madison Park, Campus High School, a fire station in Grove Hall, and the Spanish Alliances Social Center. Highland Park, Brunswick-King Park, and Shirley-Eustis House Park have been targeted for improvements, in addition to several area playgrounds.



- 1. CRAWFORD PLGD.
- 2. TROTTER SCHOOL PLGD.
- 3. KITTERIDGE SQ.
- 4. WOODCLIFF PLAY AREA
- 5. BRUNSWICK KING PK.
- 6. MADISON PARK CAMPUS HIGH SCHOOL
- 7. DUDLEY REGIONAL LIBRARY
- 8. GROVE HALL FIRE STATIONAL
- 9. SPANISH ALLIANCE SOCIAL SERVICES CENTER
- 10. SHIRLEY - EUSTIS HOUSE PK.

1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM



ROXBURY

0 600 1200 2400 FEET



## F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

The Mayor's Housing Improvement Program will benefit homeowners in Roxbury and tend to stabilize those neighborhoods where homeowners predominate. However, in order to effect improvement in the great majority of Roxbury housing stock, rehabilitation of existing structures which are not owner occupied and new housing construction are needed. These efforts should be financed, if possible, for the most part by private investors, and co-engineered by community organizations. Code enforcement should be carried out in a targeted manner concentrating on absentee owned "eye sores". Phase II of the Dudley Street planning project will soon be underway in order to assure the continued viability of Roxbury's main commercial district. Additional resources must be applied for storefront improvements, street improvements, signalization and upgrading the area as a whole. To control crime (especially drug related crime) more police manpower is needed in Roxbury and new funds should be channeled into existing or new programs to rehabilitate drug offenders, youth offenders and ex-offenders.



# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Commercial Center Decline	Improvement of parking facilities	Resurfacing/Fencing for Ruggles/Shawmut parking lot	
	Improve lighting	Mayor's Lighting Improvement Program, Dudley Sq. & Grove Hall	
	Storefront rehabilitation		Financial incentive to commercial rehab
	Street/sidewalk improvements	New signalization, cross walks, curbs Street Reconstruction in Dudley Square	
	Refurbishing of vacant lots	Clearance of debris	Landscaping, urban furniture
	Stimulate entry of new private businesses		
	Market study for Dudley Sq. revitalization		
Housing: Deterioration of stock, decline of Housing market	Preservation of stock MHP	Approximate 225 buildings - \$340,000	
	Rehab of existing units	Securing of vacant Buildings (approx. 100 structures) - \$125,000 RAP/BHA rehab of 100 units	Provide tax incentives to private community developers

FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program		Future Investment Needs	
Housing: Deterioration of stock; Decline of housing market (cont.)	Direct rental assistance to households				Funds from Section 8 monies Funds from Comm. Dev. Rev. Sharing
	New construction		RAP/BHA public housing construction - 20 units-\$1,142,000		New housing development Provide tax incentives to private/community developers
	Code enforcement				Provide support for code enforcement activities
	New homeownership financing/assistance Stabilization of existing mortgage financing				
	Capital expenditure to strengthen neighborhoods		Clearance of abandoned & unsafe buildings - approx. 200 structures - \$600,000 Restoration and improvement of vacant lots in residential areas (approx. 100 lots) - \$1,000,000		
Transportation	Street improvements to relieve congestion		Widening of narrow streets		Street reconstruction in residential neighborhoods
	Lighting improvements		Mayor's lighting program at Dudley Sq. & Egleston MBTA Grove Hall, Dudley MBTA station lighting renovation		Crosswalks signals in residential districts
	Traffic parking sign policy formulation				

FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Strategy</u>	<u>1975 Investment Program</u>	<u>Future Investment Needs</u>
Transportation (cont.)	Resolution of Southwest Corridor land use plans		Funds for development
<hr/>			
Crime	Encourage public protection		Increase police force
	Rehabilitate program		Resources (staff etc.) for rehabilitation program through community agency
<hr/>			
Jobs	Employment opportunities linked with housing development		Minority contracting and private capital investment housing and community develop- ment







M3/B16  
RA  
75/7

pt. 14

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS  
DEPARTMENT  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

WORKING DRAFT  
FOR  
COMMUNITY REVIEW

BMA-0163

## SOUTH BOSTON

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June, 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.	SHORT HISTORY	[ 3 ]
B.	EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	[ 7 ]
	City Point	
	Telegraph Hill	
	Columbia Park	
	Andrew Square	
	West Broadway	
	D Street	
	Northern Section	
C.	PAST PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT	[ 14 ]
D.	ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	[ 19 ]
	1. Residential Stability	
	2. Incompatible Land Use	
	3. Transportation Problems	
	4. Commercial Vitality	
	5. Vacant and Underutilized Land	
E.	1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[ 25 ]
F.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS	[ 27 ]
G.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS AS RELATED TO ISSUES, STRATEGIES AND 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[ 28 ]





## INTRODUCTION

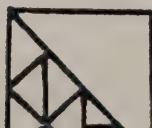
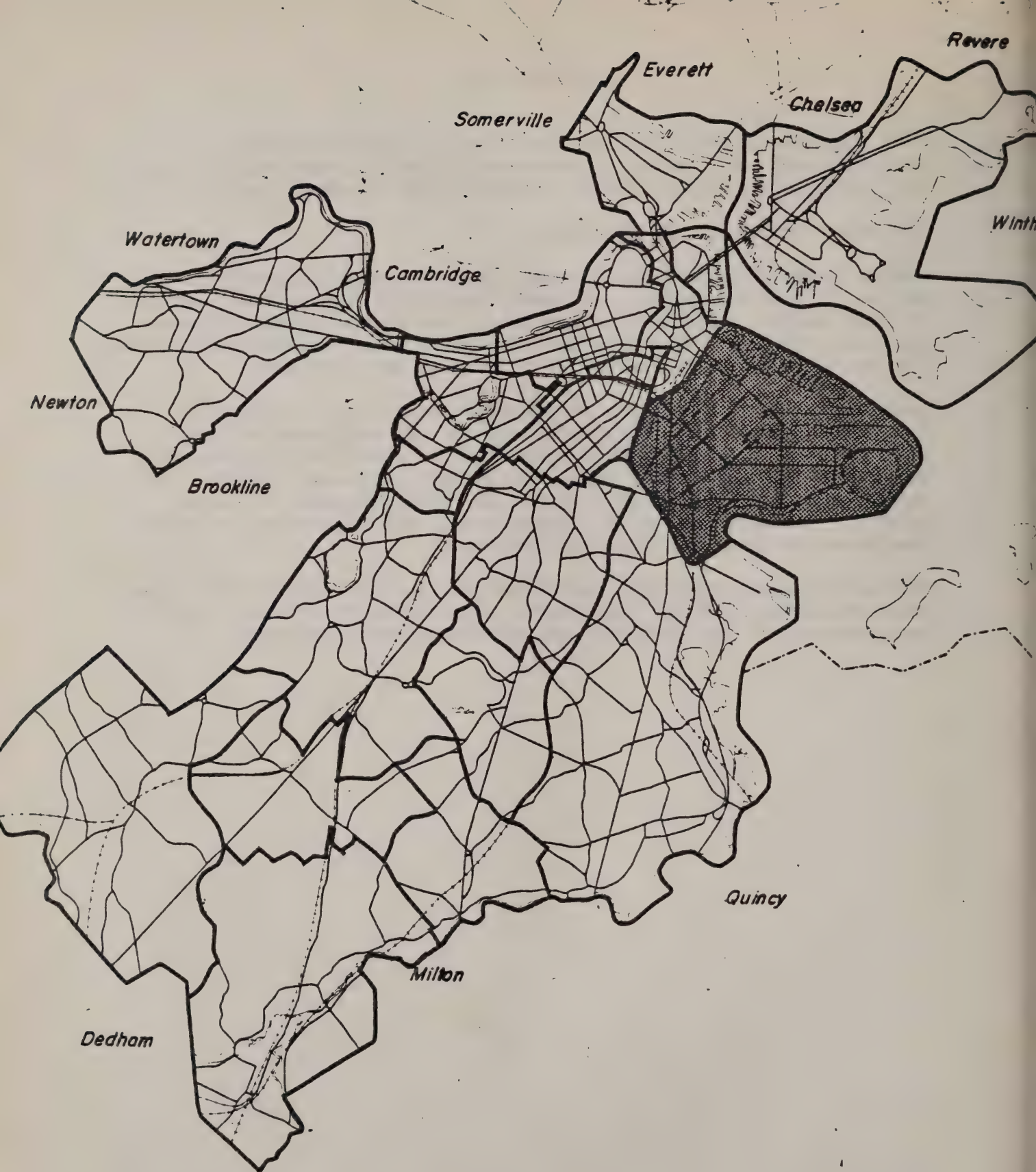
This report was prepared by the South Boston District Planners. It is a draft document and is meant to structure discussion among residents and city representatives on planning strategies and investment needs.

This report does a number of things:

First, it establishes a base of population, income and housing data as well as listing and analysis of recent past public and private investment in South Boston. This information can be used by the District Planners and others who are involved in the planning process, neighborhood residents, Little City Hall staff and other city agencies and departments.

Second, it offers an analysis of the major issues which confront the community along with recommended strategies. These strategies should form the basis of discussion for community residents for the Community Development Revenue Sharing (CDRS) and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) participation process as well as for involvement in issues which are not addressed by city expenditures such as rezoning, private development or programs funded by the state.

Third, the report recognizes that strategies are not self-fulfilling and makes recommendations for investments, both public and private, which are necessary to help carry through the recommended strategies.



SOUTH BOSTON





## A. SHORT HISTORY

South Boston was founded in 1630 as a part of Dorchester and was annexed to Boston in 1804. At that time, South Boston was a peninsula of approximately 570 acres extending north from Dorchester, dominated by two prominent hills and separated from the Boston peninsula by South Boston Bay and the Dorchester Flats.

South Boston remained basically undeveloped until the early nineteenth century, when real estate speculators purchased some land, intending to develop it as a high income residential neighborhood. In 1805 the first bridge connecting South Boston to Boston Proper was constructed, and the district's characteristic grid street pattern was laid out. Development was rather slow at first, but a number of wealthy Yankee merchants built large wooden houses for themselves along East Broadway and around Thomas Park on Telegraph Hill.

The pace of development accelerated in the 1830's as new bridges were opened and the northern marshland began to be filled for industrial development. The region of South Bay became a center for the lumber and foundry industries. As more land was created and industrial development expanded, South Boston increasingly became the home of industrial workers and their families, most of whom were Irish immigrants. These laborers settled in the area west of Dorchester Street, in frame triple-decker houses.

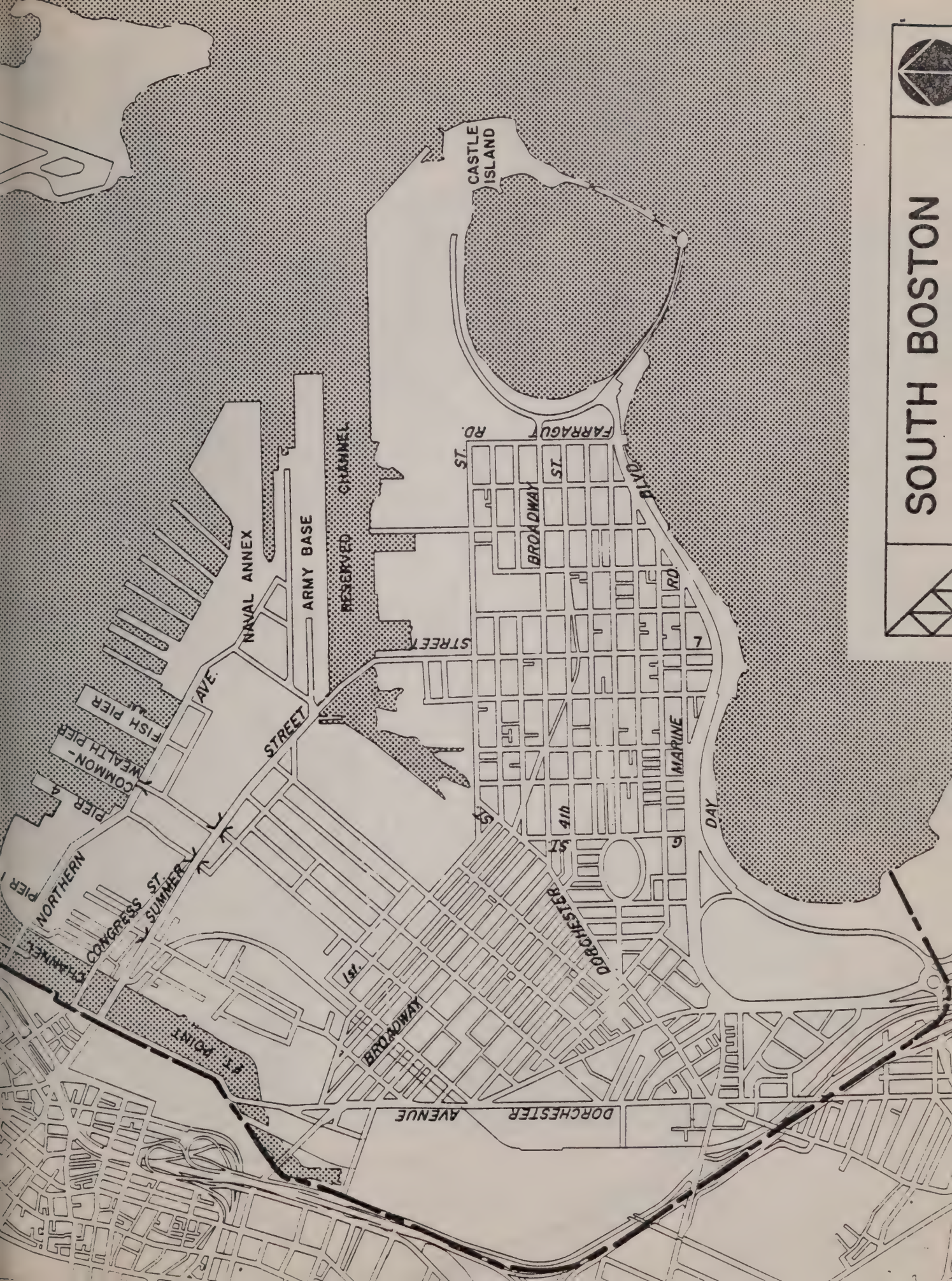
The Great Boston fire in 1874 brought more immigrant laborers to the already crowded western section, and as Back Bay was established as Boston's fashionable residential district, South Boston lost its last attraction as a high income neighborhood. Much of the peninsula was developed during the 1870's and 1880's with simple wooden or brick row houses and detached three-family dwellings. The extension of streetcar service to the southern and eastern shores in 1890 led to the completion of the community's residential development. At the end of the nineteenth century other immigrant groups, Lithuanians, Poles and Italians, began to settle in the area west of Dorchester Street; and many of the Irish, already established in the community, crossed Dorchester Street to move into the eastern section.

The twentieth century has brought a steady increase of activity to the northern, non-residential section of South Boston. Industrial and warehousing operations have grown in size and number; and the rail-road yards, once so vitally important, have fallen into disuse as trucking and containerized shipping have become the primary means of transporting goods and materials. This growth was for the most part unplanned and uncontrolled and resulted in a band of mixed residential and industrial land along the northern boundary of the South Boston residential neighborhood and a high incidence of truck traffic on residential streets.



South Boston lost almost a third of its population between 1950 and 1970, and recent years have brought an increasing turnover and change in the population of this formerly extremely stable community. Greatest losses have occurred in the 0-9 years age category and in the sections most heavily affected by industrial encroachment and increasing truck traffic, which are characterized by deteriorated and abandoned housing. The elderly population has increased in South Boston; apparently many former South Boston residents have returned to move into the two elderly housing projects built in the last fifteen years. The Boston Housing Authority has also built three low income housing projects in South Boston, the Old Harbor or Mary McCormack Project in 1938, the Old Colony Project in 1941, and the D Street Project in 1949. Although the majority of South Boston's population has been Irish since the early nineteenth century, this majority has been decreasing, while numbers of Eastern Europeans, French Canadians and Italians are growing. The neighborhood has continued its traditional character of a predominantly white middle income neighborhood through the present day.

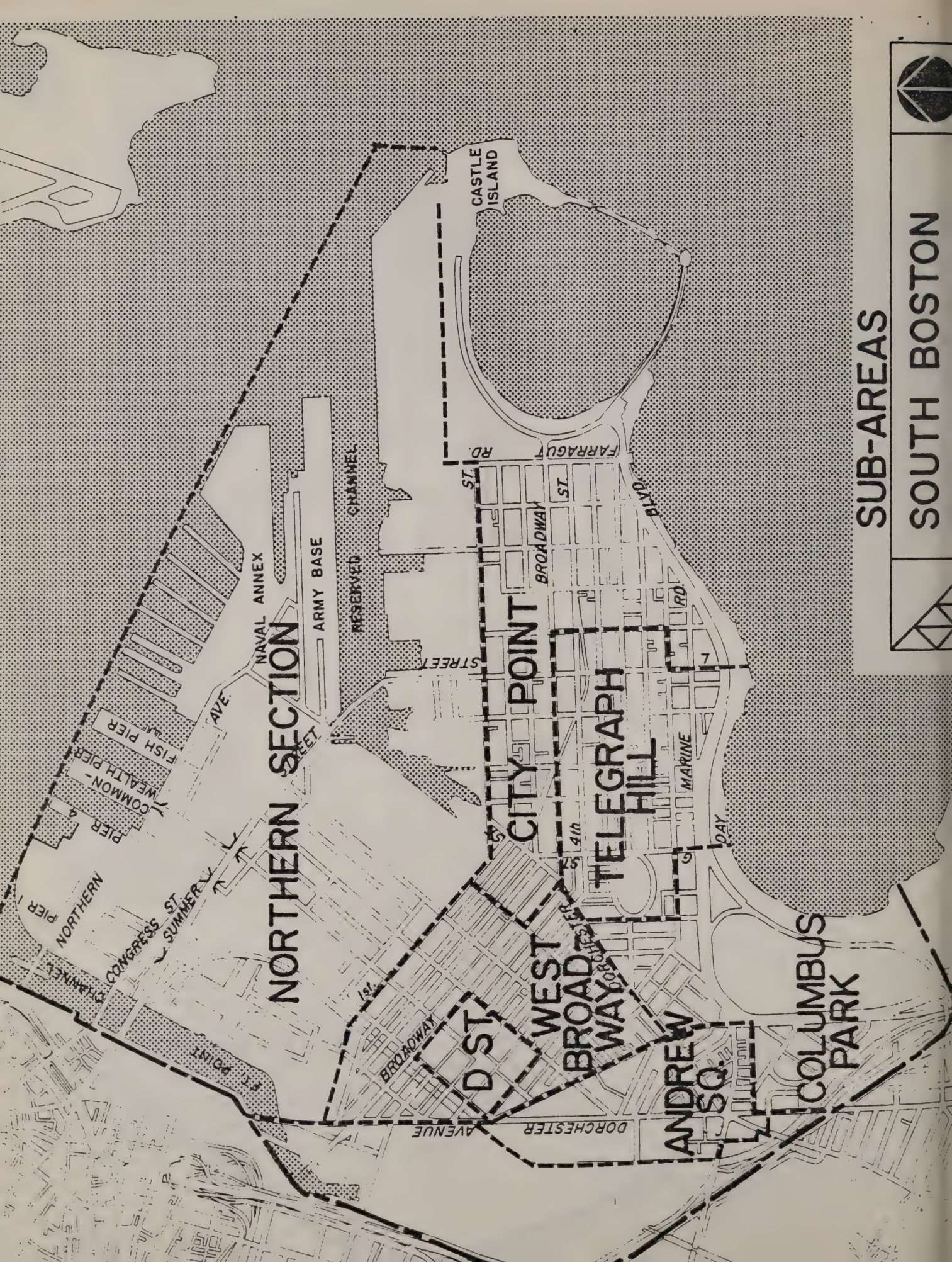




# SOUTH BOSTON







NORTHERN SECTION

CITY POINT

TELEGRAPH HILL

WEST BROADWAY

ANDREW SQ.

COLUMBUS PARK

SUB-AREAS

SOUTH BOSTON





## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Information on population and housing in this report was derived from the 1960 and 1970 U.S. Census. Seven sub-areas of South Boston have been designated for further analysis: City Point (1970 Census tracts 601, 602, and 605), Telegraph Hill (603 and 604), Columbus Park (610 and 611), Andrew Square (612 and 613), West Broadway (606, 608, 609 and 614), D Street (607), and the Northern Section.

### CITY POINT

City Point is located in the eastern section of South Boston and includes Independence Park, the Christopher Lee Playground, Marine Park, Pleasure Bay and Castle Island. A portion of the commercial center which serves the entire district is located along Broadway in City Point, and local neighborhood commercial establishments are scattered on corners of residential streets throughout the area. The Sea Land containerport and other port activity occupy filled land north of Marine Park and Pleasure Bay, and several heavy industrial uses are located along First Street. Aside from the Lee Playground, there is no buffer or definite boundary separating industrial land from the residential neighborhood, and there is evidence of housing deterioration along the northern edge of the area.

There are some large single and two-family detached houses along East Broadway and in the vicinity of Marine Park and the waterfront; the remainder are either wooden triple-deckers or brick or frame row houses. Although most of the housing is in good or fair condition, 1,622 units required over \$1,000 fix-up in 1973. More than 25% of the units in City Point are owner-occupied; this figure is slightly greater than the district average. The majority of residential structures in the area contain three dwelling units, and so most have resident owners. The degree of mobility in the area is surprisingly high, however; only 37.2% of the area's 1970 population had lived in the same house for five or more years, compared with the district-wide figure of 52.7% and 50% for the city as a whole. The area experienced a moderate 7.5% loss of population between 1960 and 1970. Categories of young adults and elderly increased slightly during the period, while there was a significant loss of over 21% in the population of children under 10. Incomes in City Point are higher than in most other areas of South Boston. The 1970 median family income for the area was \$8,663-10,183, with a relatively low percentage (18%) of the area's families earning less than \$5,000.

### TELEGRAPH HILL

Telegraph Hill is located in the eastern section of South Boston and is bounded by Broadway, Old Harbor Street, M Street, and the L Street Beach. Thomas Park and the South Boston High School atop

Dorchester Heights are visually dominant features. The area also includes a portion of the district's commercial area along Broadway and scattered local neighborhood stores on street corners. Thomas Park is surrounded by single and two-family detached houses, some of the most architecturally notable buildings in the district. From this point the residential streets slope downward, lined with low-rise brick or frame row houses, with some frame triple-deckers near the L Street Beach. The majority of houses in the area are in good condition and the rest in fair condition. Fewer than a quarter of the dwelling units required fix-up exceeding \$1,000 in 1973. The area shows strong signs of residential stability, with almost 35% of its dwelling units owner-occupied and 61.5% of its population who have lived in the same house for five or more years. The area experienced a moderate 7.7% population loss between 1960 and 1970. It lost over 28% of its children under 10 and gained 3% in youth aged 10-19, while the elderly population increased almost 18%. Telegraph Hill has some of the highest incomes in South Boston; the median family income was \$10,496-11,207, and only 12.6% of the area's families had incomes under \$5,000 in 1970.

#### COLUMBUS PARK

Columbus Park is in the southern section of South Boston, bounded by Old Harbor Street, Dorchester Street, Old Colony Avenue, William Devine Way, Dorchester Avenue, the Expressway, and Carson Beach. Carson Beach and Columbus Park itself, a large active recreation field, are dominant features of the area. The neighborhood includes two housing projects, the Mary McCormack (Old Harbor) and the Old Colony housing projects, and a relatively small amount of private housing. The McCormack housing project, built in 1938, is fairly well-maintained, and has a good deal of grass and open space. The design of the project, which is quite pleasant, includes 2-4 family and a few single family brick structures. The Old Colony is neither as well-designed nor as pleasant but is fairly well-maintained. Most of the area's private houses are frame triple-deckers; the majority are in fair condition, and the rest are in good condition. 361 units required fix-up exceeding \$1,000 in 1973. The stability of the area is demonstrated by the fact that over 64% of its residents have lived in the same house for five or more years. Columbus Park lost 30% of its population between 1960 and 1970. Greatest losses occurred in categories of young children and adults, while the elderly population increased over 61% in the same period. The area's median family income is low (\$6,319-6,659), and about 41% of the families in the area have incomes under \$5,000.

#### ANDREW SQUARE

Andrew Square is in the western part of South Boston, bounded by Dorchester Avenue, Old Colony Avenue and William Devine Way. It has a small commercial center, which is a mixture of stores which



serve the local neighborhood and stores which serve and supply other businesses and industries. An MBTA transit station is also located in this center. The dominant housing type is the frame triple-decker, complemented by some single and two-family houses. The majority of the area's housing stock is in fair condition, with some structures in poor condition and others in good condition. 484 units (over half of the area total) required fix-up over \$1,000 in 1973. Approximately a fourth of the area's dwelling units are owner-occupied and about 62% of the area's residents have lived in the same house for five or more years. Two kinds of conversions have been taking place in the area, from two-family houses to single family dwellings, and from large flats to smaller apartments. These conversions are evidence of an increasing and changing demand for housing in the area, which may be generated in part by the new campus of the University of Massachusetts at nearby Columbia Point. Andrew Square's population increased slightly by 3.4% between 1960 and 1970. There were gains in all age categories except 0-9 years, which decreased 18.5%. The area experienced a great increase of 30.5% in the elderly category. The area's median family income is rather low (\$7,558-7,694), and almost 30% of its families earn incomes under \$5,000.

#### WEST BROADWAY

West Broadway is in the western section of South Boston. It surrounds the D Street housing project and is bounded roughly by West First Street, Dorchester Avenue, Old Colony Avenue, Dorchester Street, West Broadway and F Street. The area includes a major portion of South Boston's central business district, which runs along Broadway. A number of industrial establishments and commercial warehouses are located along West First and West Second Streets and in the north-western corner of the area. The lack of a definite boundary or buffer to separate the residential neighborhood from these uses has resulted in a section of mixed use along the northern edge of the area. Heavy truck traffic generated by these warehouses and industries creates hazard, pollution and congestion on residential streets. The rowhouse, of either brick or wooden frame, is the dominant housing type in the area. Although the bulk of residential structures are in fair condition, many are in poor condition and few are in good condition. 1,125 units (over half of the area's housing stock) required fix-up in excess of \$1,000 in 1973. There is occasional evidence of new investment in the area, but also frequent signs of abandonment and extreme deterioration. There are many vacant lots in the area, and most of these have become hazardous and unsightly repositories of debris or wrecked cars. The cost of rehabilitating most of the housing in the area is beyond the means of landlords, and the rent they would have to charge to cover improvement costs would be beyond the means of their tenants. About 28% of the area's housing units are owner-occupied, and about 53% of the area's residents have lived in the same house for five or more years. The West Broadway area lost over a fourth of its



population between 1960 and 1970, with heavy losses in all age categories. The area's median family income (\$7,100-9,316) is rather low, and close to 25% of the area's families earn less than \$5,000. There is a good deal of shuffling of population between the D Street project and the immediately adjacent parts of the West Broadway neighborhood. Generally, this section is undergoing rapid transition from a low level stable to a downward transitional neighborhood, being blighted by both the D Street housing project and the surrounding industry, which continues to encroach on the residential neighborhood.

#### D STREET

D Street, which is bounded by B Street, D Street, West Broadway and West Seventh Street, is entirely occupied by a poorly designed and poorly maintained low income housing project. The project is overcrowded and badly in need of upgrading. The immediate area is severely lacking usable open space and public and private services and facilities. D Street experienced a net population loss of 5% between 1960 and 1970. The area lost almost 24% of its young childhood population and close to 30% of its young adults. During the same period, the area gained almost 30% in the 10-19 age category and experienced more moderate gains in adult and elderly population. The median family income is low, \$4,590, and over 57% of the families in D Street earn less than \$5,000. Vandalism and crime and the fear that they generate are major problems in D Street. The project is a blighting influence on the surrounding residential and commercial areas and is itself being blighted by nearby industrial development and truck traffic.

#### NORTHERN SECTION

The Northern Section of South Boston is a large expanse of filled land extending northward from East and West First Street to the Fort Point Channel and Boston Harbor. Land in the northern section is used primarily for industrial, warehousing and distribution, institutional and commercial purposes. Development is of relatively low density, with large areas of vacant and underutilized land. The Northern Section is distinct from the rest of South Boston in terms of land use and density; but the East/West First Street truck route which divides them is not a definite boundary and non-residential uses are mixed into the residential neighborhood. The Summer Street, Congress Street and Northern Avenue bridges over Fort Point Channel provide access to the Northern Section from downtown Boston and points farther north. Access from the south is less direct, and many trucks use residential streets to get into the area. The great amount of under-developed land in the area in close proximity to downtown and the construction activity across

the Fort Point Channel in the South Station vicinity are creating development pressure in the Northern Section. The vast majority of land in the Northern Section is in the ownership of three private corporations (Athanas, Town & Cities, and Gillette), the Massachusetts Port Authority, and the United States Government. Two major commercial and residential developments have begun to be planned by private investors for land near the Fort Point Channel. The recently closed South Boston Naval Base Annex is being planned by the City for industrial reuse.

# Comparative Statistics - South Boston

## 1970 U.S. Census Data

	City Point (601,602, 605)	Telegraph Hill (603,604)	Columbus Park (610,611)	Andrew Square (612,613)
<u>Population</u>				
Total 1970	11,378	10,144	5,750	2,222
%Change from '60	-7.5%	-7.7%	-30.0%	+3.4%
Total Black 1970	21	10	155	18
Total Black 1960	24	16	2	0
Aged 0-9 yrs. - 1970	1,822	1,406	1,111	325
%Change from '60	-21.3%	-28.3%	-35.2%	-18.5%
Aged 10-19 yrs. - 1970	1,812	1,709	1,130	385
%Change from '60	-5.6%	+3.0%	-12.3%	+7.5%
Aged 20-34 yrs. - 1970	2,349	1,800	870	372
%Change from '60	+2.1%	-10.0%	-32.2%	+8.8%
Aged 35-64 yrs. - 1970	3,959	3,586	1,590	819
%Change from '60	-9.7%	-9.7%	-27.2%	+1.9%
Aged 65 yrs. & over 1970	1,436	1,643	1,049	321
%Change from '60	+4.1%	+17.7%	+16.4%	+30.5%
<u>Income</u>				
Median Family	\$ 8,663- 10,183	\$10,496- 11,207	\$6,319- 6,659	\$7,558- 7,694
% Families under \$5,000	18.0%	12.6%	41.1%	29.2%
<u>Housing</u>				
Total Dwelling Units	4,216	3,554	2,248	913
Units Needing Fix-up in excess of \$1,000	1,622	817	361	484
%Owner Occupied Units	27.0%	34.8%	7.8%	24.2%
Market Condition	Strong-Weak	Stable	Stable	Moderate
Mobility of Residents- Residence over 5 Years	37.2%	61.5%	64.3%	62.0%



# Comparative Statistics - South Boston

## 1970 U.S. Census Data

<u>Population</u>	<u>West Broadway (606,608, 609,614)</u>	<u>D Street (607)</u>	<u>South Boston District</u>	<u>City Of Boston</u>
Total 1970	5,455	3,539	38,488	641,071
%Change from '60	-26.4%	-5.0%	-10.4%	-8.1%
Total Black 1970	12	173	389	104,206
Total Black 1960	231	61	357	63,165
Aged 0-9 yrs. - 1970	842	1,062	6,568	101,634
%Change from '60	-39.2%	-23.9%	-28.4%	-15.8%
Aged 10-19 yrs. - 1970	1,043	933	7,012	112,122
%Change from '60	-18.7%	+29.9%	-3.0%	+9.2%
Aged 20-34 yrs. - 1970	917	456	6,764	156,497
%Change from '60	-30.3%	-29.6%	-14.3%	+9.2%
Aged 35-64 yrs. - 1970	1,930	799	12,683	189,059
%Change from '60	-24.7%	+17.2%	-13.1%	-22.8%
Aged 65 yrs. & Over 1970	723	289	5,461	81,759
%Change from '60	-16.7%	+2.1%	+7.7%	-4.5%
<u>Income</u>				
Median Family	\$7,100- 9,316	\$4,590	\$ 4,590- 11,207	\$ 9,133
% Families under \$5,000	24.5%	57.1%	24.9%	21.8%
<u>Housing</u>				
Total Dwelling Units	2,235	1,091	14,257	232,856
Units Needing Fix-up over \$1,000	1,125	1,091	5,500	67,102
%Owner Occupied Units	28.3%	0	23.9%	27.0%
Market Condition	Weak	N/A	Stable-Weak	Stable
Mobility of Residents Residence over 5 Years	53.1%	53.3%	52.7%	50%

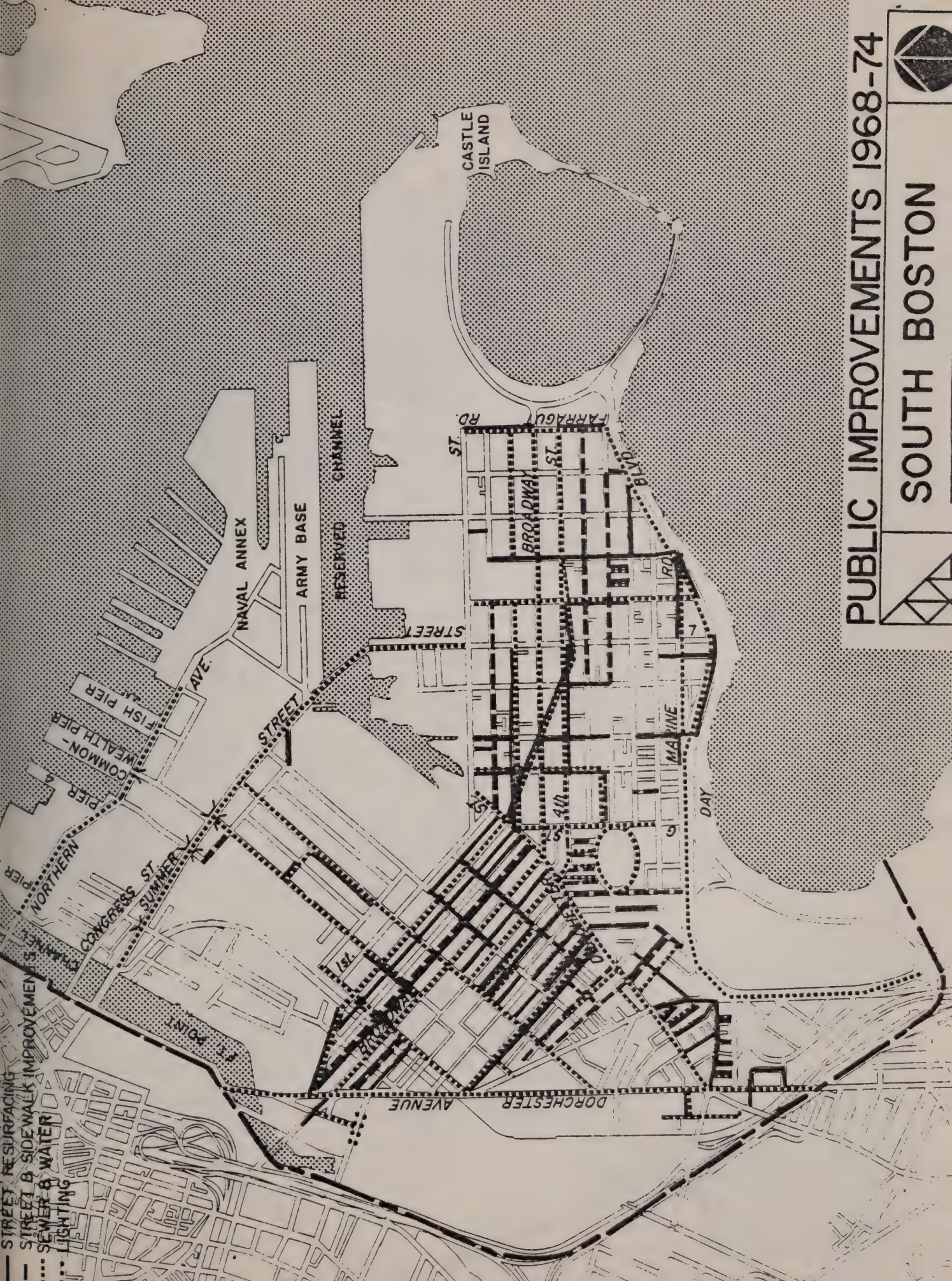
### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Aside from the establishment of three units of BHA leased housing and the subsidization of the construction of the Bay Towers 236 housing development by the Federal Government (152 units), past public investment in South Boston has been in the form of public works improvements and the construction and improvement of public facilities, parks and recreation facilities. Close to \$3,000,000 was spent between 1968 and 1974 on street and sidewalk improvements, replacement of sewer and water lines, and installation of street lights. The city invested over \$1.5 million to rehabilitate the L Street Bath House and High School Annex and \$250,000 in the South Boston Health Center. Close to \$5 million was spent on construction of the new Tynan Elementary School. Over \$1 million was spent on improvements to parks and recreational facilities, including the B Street/West Third Playground, Columbus Park, Lee Playground, Father Buckley Playground, Thomas Park, the L Street Bathing Beach, and the Sweeney Play Area.

### PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

A review of building permits for construction activity in excess of \$10,000 from 1970-74 shows that there has been commercial, residential, industrial, and institutional investment in South Boston. The majority of this investment has been in commercial buildings. There has been some rehabilitation and construction of new commercial buildings along Dorchester Avenue, near Andrew Square, and along West Broadway. The bulk of commercial investment, however, has been made in the northern section of South Boston, concentrated along West First Street, Northern Avenue and the Fort Point Channel. Aside from some residential conversions in the vicinity of Andrew Square, the limited amount of residential investment which appears in the building permits showing improvements of over \$10,000 was made in the City Point and Telegraph Hill areas. In addition, some industrial rehabilitation occurred along Northern Avenue and East First Street. Other investment evident from the building permits is rehabilitation of a medical facility on land owned by the Navy on Summer Street.



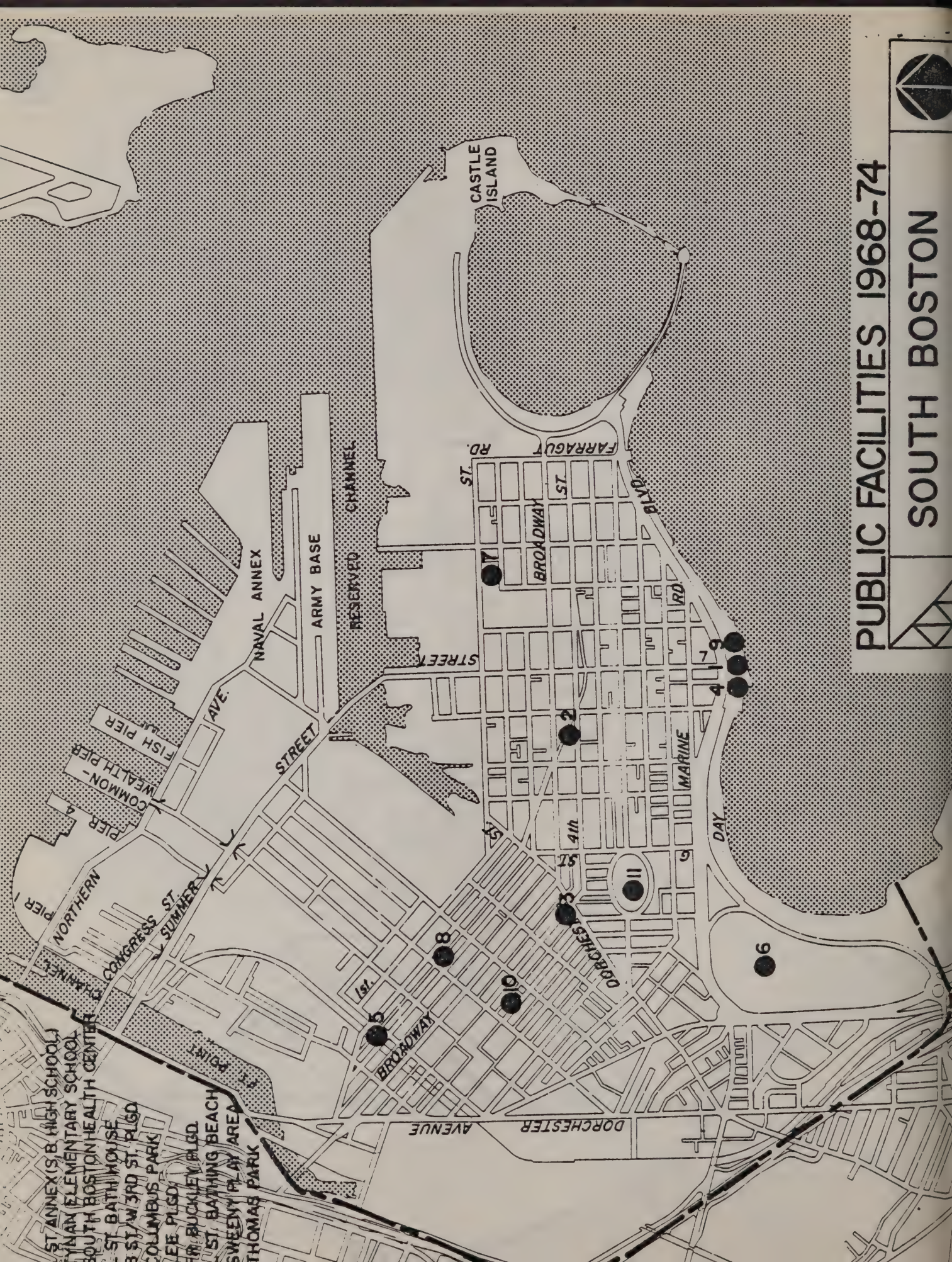


- STREET RESURFACING
- - STREET & SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS
- ... SEWER & WATER
- ..... LIGHTING

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1968-74

SOUTH BOSTON





ST ANNEX (S.B. HIGH SCHOOL)  
LYMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
SOUTH BOSTON HEALTH CENTER  
ST BATH HOUSE  
33 ST W 3RD ST, PLGD  
COLUMBUS PARK  
LEE PLGD  
FR BUCKLEY BLVD  
ST BATHING BEACH  
SWEENEY PLAY AREA  
THOMAS PARK

CASTLE  
ISLAND

FARRAGUT  
RD

ST

BROADWAY

ST

BLVD

RD

STREET

STREET

NAVAL ANNEX

ARMY BASE

RESERVED CHANNEL

FISH PIER  
COMMON-  
WEALTH PIER  
PIER 4  
PIER 1  
NORTHERN  
CHANNEL  
CONGRESS ST  
SUMMER ST

DORCHESTER  
AVENUE

MARINE

DAY

PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74

SOUTH BOSTON



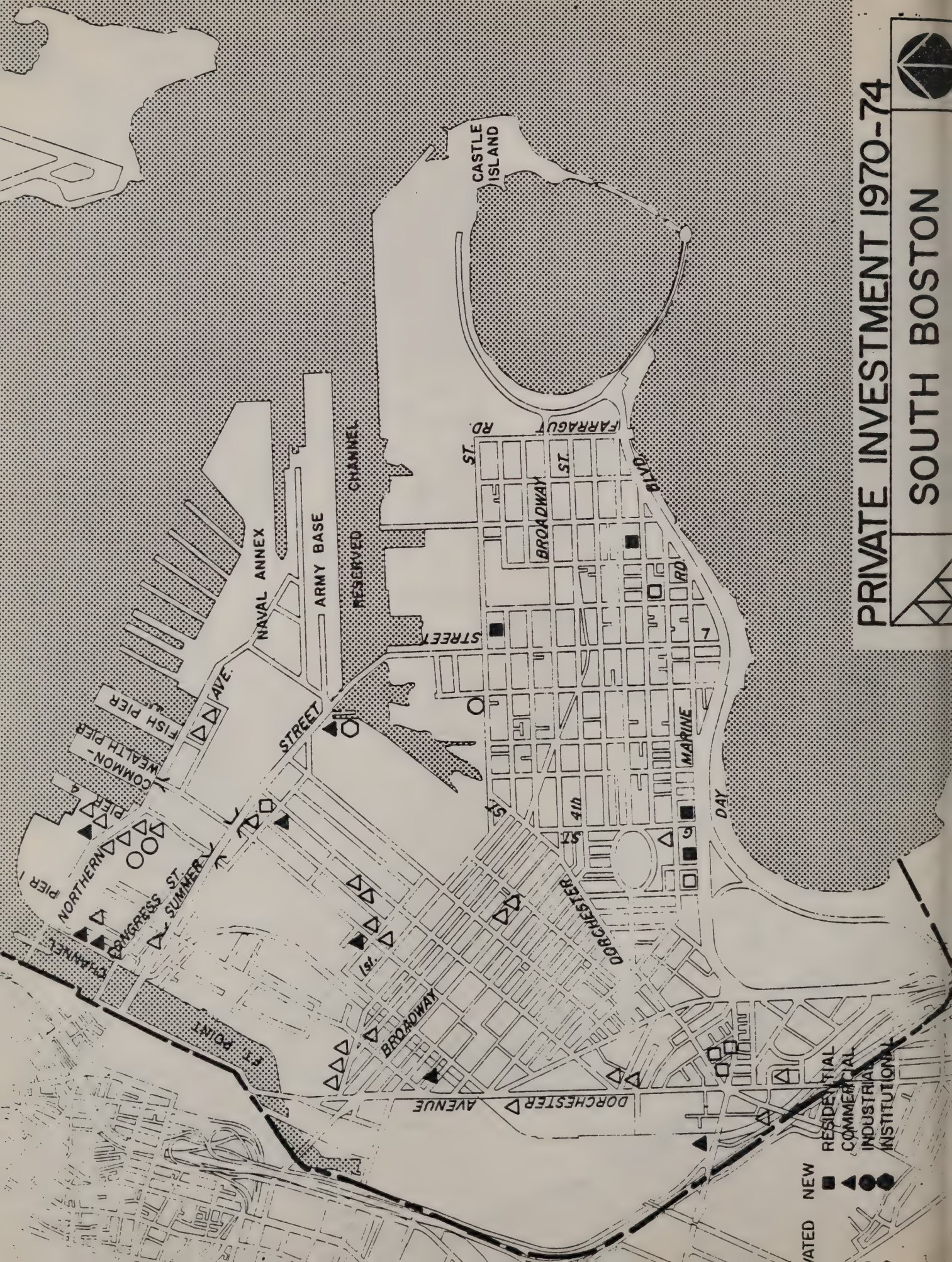




# SOUTH BOSTON

BHA LEASED HOUSING UNIT





PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1970-74

SOUTH BOSTON



NEW  
RESIDENTIAL  
COMMERCIAL  
INDUSTRIAL  
INSTITUTIONAL



## D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

Five major categories of issues have been identified for discussion: residential stability, incompatible land use, transportation problems, commercial vitality, and vacant and underused land. These issues are described separately for the purpose of clarity in presenting strategies and investment needs. They are all, however, related to the critical issues of the stability of the South Boston residential neighborhood.

### 1. RESIDENTIAL STABILITY

#### Issue

South Boston has long been one of the city's stablest residential neighborhoods with a strong sense of community rooted in the district's physical separation from the rest of the city, its fine stock of parks and beaches, and its long traditions. During the last twenty years, however, there has been turnover and change in population, and the community's stability has begun to show signs of erosion. The district's population has been decreasing. Families with young children have been moving out of the neighborhood in large numbers while the elderly population has been increasing. Over 90% of South Boston's housing stock was built before 1939, most of it much earlier. Many of these older houses, even ones which have been well-maintained on a regular basis require some major reinvestment now and present special maintainance problems for residents. At the same time, costs of rehabilitation and maintenance have risen so high that in order to afford to make necessary repairs, owners would have to raise their rents and existing tenants might be forced out. Home improvement loans are difficult to obtain in those areas where new investment is most needed.

The lack of a definite boundary and buffer to separate industrial and residential uses has created special problems along the northern edge of the community. A band of mixed uses exists along First and Second Streets in both the eastern and western sections of the district. These areas suffer the impact of heavy truck traffic generated by industrial uses and exhibit signs of housing deterioration and even some abandonment.

The West Broadway area has additional problems. This area is affected not only by industrial encroachment and truck traffic on residential streets, but also by the deteriorated and overcrowded D Street housing project. Evidence of deterioration and abandonment are frequent in the area. Some abandoned buildings are in extremely bad condition and susceptible to vandalism and fires, which in turn threaten other houses in the vicinity. The many vacant lots in the area, filled with debris or wrecked cars, are safety hazards and highly visible symbols of neglect, which discourage reinvestment. Housing in the area has been steadily deteriorating because of overcrowding and frequent turnover of residents whose low incomes have prevented them from making the necessary repairs to their property.

## Strategy

A concentrated system of public investment is required to stimulate private investment in residential South Boston and restore the neighborhood's stability. The Housing Improvement Program, which offers a cash rebate incentive and technical assistance to resident owners wishing to rehabilitate their property, is the first step in preserving the housing stock of South Boston. This program should work well in those areas where housing is basically sound and incomes are high enough to afford the required investment.

In other areas, however, notably West Broadway, where housing deterioration is pronounced, incomes are low and home improvement loans are difficult to obtain, more extensive rehabilitation assistance is necessary. Some funds have been set aside for rehabilitation work on Old Colony Housing Project in 1975, but major additional investment is needed to improve the public housing and to increase maintenance and security in the projects.

Buildings outside the housing projects which cannot be feasibly rehabilitated should be demolished, and vacant lots should be cleaned up, graded and maintained. The 1975 program includes funds for building demolition; this program should be expanded and the procedure for getting buildings demolished streamlined. The vacant lot program should also be expanded and targeted for maximum impact.

Capital investments in public facilities, public works, and parks and recreation facilities scheduled for 1975 should help to restore resident confidence and stimulate private investment. Additional capital expenditures are necessary including residential street improvements, street lights, tree planting, additional funding for the community center, and development of new open space and recreational facilities in the West Broadway area.

Zoning and the policy for granting variances and conditional use requests should be reviewed and modified as necessary in order to control land use mix and buildings conversions in the future. The city should meet with local banks and lending institutions to see what can be done to increase availability of mortgage and home improvement money and stimulate investment in the community. By identifying housing needs, funding programs and suitable development sites, the city can encourage appropriate new residential development in South Boston.

## 2. INCOMPATIBLE LAND USE

### Issue

The lack of a definite boundary or buffer to separate industrial and warehousing uses from the residential neighborhood has resulted in a band of mixed use along First and Second Streets.



Industrial and warehousing operations and the truck traffic which they generate produce problems of safety, noise and air pollution for residents and have contributed to the deterioration and instability of adjacent residential areas.

### Strategy

Existing zoning should be reviewed and modified to prevent mixture of these incompatible land uses in the future. Through its policy of granting variances and conditional uses and other discretionary review powers, such as design and environmental review, the city should continue its policies of preventing further non-compatible development in residential areas and, to the extent possible, lessen the negative impact of industry in existing mixed use areas.

## 3. TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS

### Issue

Because of inadequate access to the industrial and warehousing operations in the Northern Section, trucks are currently using residential streets. The First Street truck route was recently established to address the problem but has been successful to only a limited degree. Traffic on the truck route itself is frequently held up by trucks which are double parked or unloading. Enforcing the truck route and preventing trucks from using other streets has been a problem; but even if truck traffic could be confined to using the truck route, trucks would still be using B and C Streets, which are primarily local streets themselves.

The East/West truck route, furthermore, does little to accommodate the need for trucks to travel north and south. Truck traffic moving between the Northern Section and the turnpike or the Southeast Expressway currently travels through the western part of the residential neighborhood. Movement between the industrial area and downtown or points farther north is less of a problem, as this traffic is likely to use one of the three bridges which cross the Fort Point Channel. Two of these bridges are in bad repair and have restrictive weight limits. Parked and unloading trucks on Summer Street cause hazards and delay for trucks as well as for South Boston residents trying to drive to downtown.

### Strategy

Although an intensified enforcement effort could help to alleviate problems to some extent, trucks will continue to use residential streets until a safe and convenient truck route which completely bypasses the residential neighborhood is established. The city should make necessary modifications to the existing truck route and continue ongoing review of trucking



needs and planning and design of the Seaport Access Road. The Northern Avenue bridge is currently being repaired, but will be realigned and replaced in the future. The Summer Street railroad bridge, the Summer Street bridge over the Fort Point Channel, the West Fourth Street bridge, the Broadway bridge, and the Dorchester Avenue bridge (connecting South Boston to Dorchester) all require repairs.

#### 4. COMMERCIAL VITALITY

##### Issues

Like its housing stock, the commercial areas in South Boston are old and in need of substantial investment of private and public monies to bring it up to a level of attractiveness and safety that will make them pleasant and profitable assets to the South Boston community. The most obvious problems are lack of easy access, including traffic congestion, lack of convenient parking spaces, difficult pedestrian crossings, and insufficient public transit. Lack of coordination among store owners along Broadway has given the shopping areas a cluttered, disjointed look that is unattractive. Insufficient street lighting has led to a fear of break-ins, and this in turn has resulted in the installation of bars and gratings that further reduce the attractiveness of the area. Even with the gratings and other security precautions there is a strong desire for the more intensive type of police protection that could only be provided by foot patrolmen.

The small commercial center at Andrew Square has not developed as fully as it might and a study is needed to determine what the full potential of this area is and how it can be achieved.

##### Strategy

The city's strategies for the improvement of local commercial districts call for coordinated public and private activity and investment. To achieve this, the city should encourage and strengthen local business groups and work with them in planning and paying for needed improvements. The new parking lot to be constructed on Broadway represents a major city commitment to the future of South Boston's main shopping area. Other signs of the city's involvement will be new street lights and street trees in the Broadway shopping area.

Partly as a result of the impetus created by the proposed new city investment, 30 local merchants have revived the South Boston Businessmen's Association. The city will work with this group, and local residents in planning and funding additional improvements to the commercial area. Most of these improvements will be designed to increase the accessibility, safety and attractiveness of South Boston's shopping areas.

## 5. VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED LAND

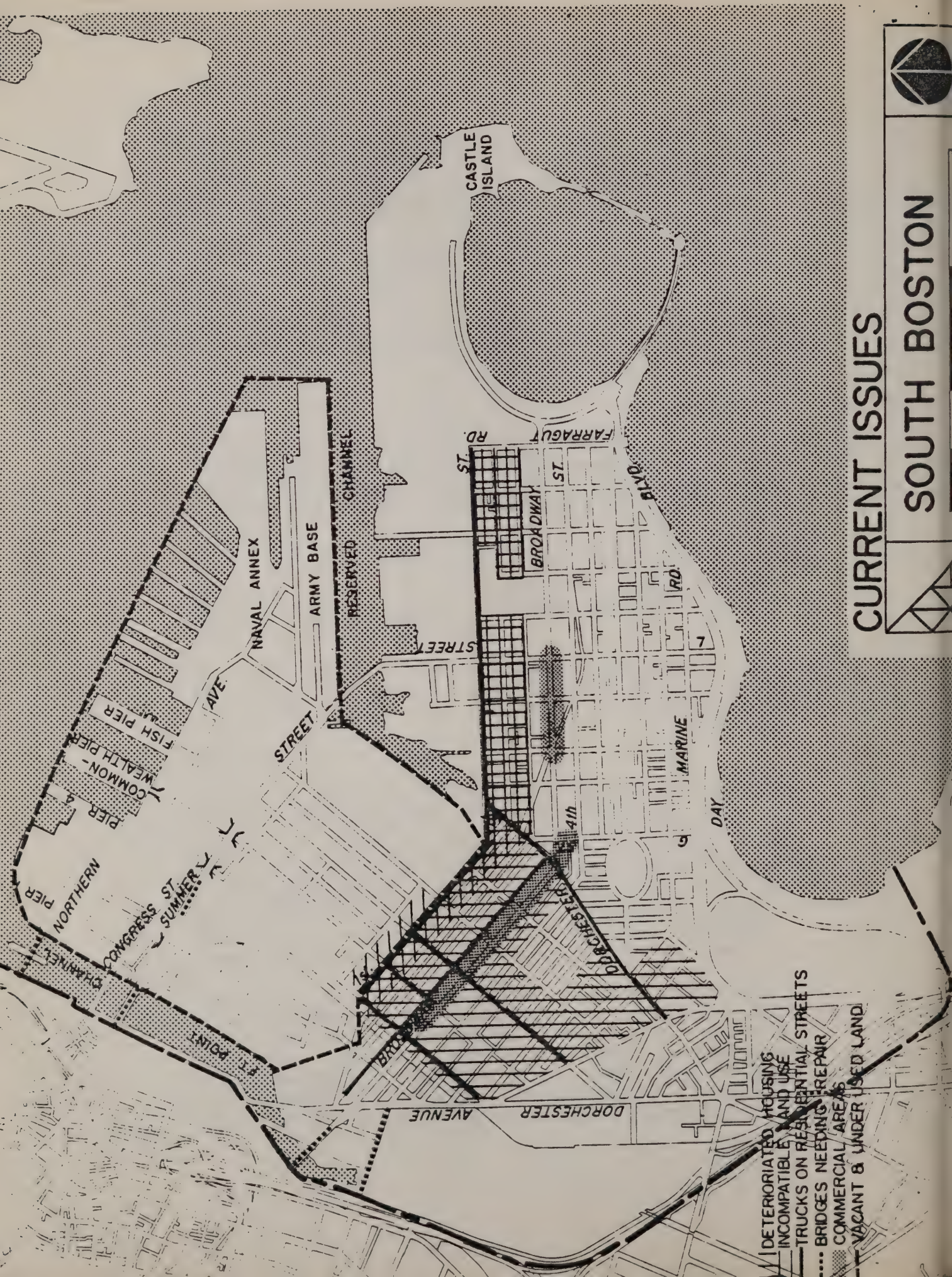
### Issue

South Boston has a large amount of vacant land and land that is greatly underutilized. The vast majority of this land is located in the northern, industrial section, but vacant residential land exists, especially in the westernmost sections. In the industrial areas the vacant land represents lost tax base for the city and lost job possibilities for South Boston residents. In the residential areas, the vacant lots are a blight on their neighbors, and represent potential for viable reuses, such as new one and two family housing, open space and recreation. It is not enough simply to come up with new uses for these areas. The uses must not create new problems for the residential community.

### Strategy

The strategy for dealing with vacant land is to make it easier for potential developers to find out about suitable sites, to determine what kinds of uses are appropriate, and what kind of public facilities and services can be made available.





# CURRENT ISSUES

## SOUTH BOSTON

- DETERIORATED HOUSING
- INCOMPATIBLE LAND USE
- TRUCKS ON RESIDENTIAL STREETS
- BRIDGES NEEDING REPAIR
- COMMERCIAL AREAS
- VACANT & UNDER USED LAND



#### E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

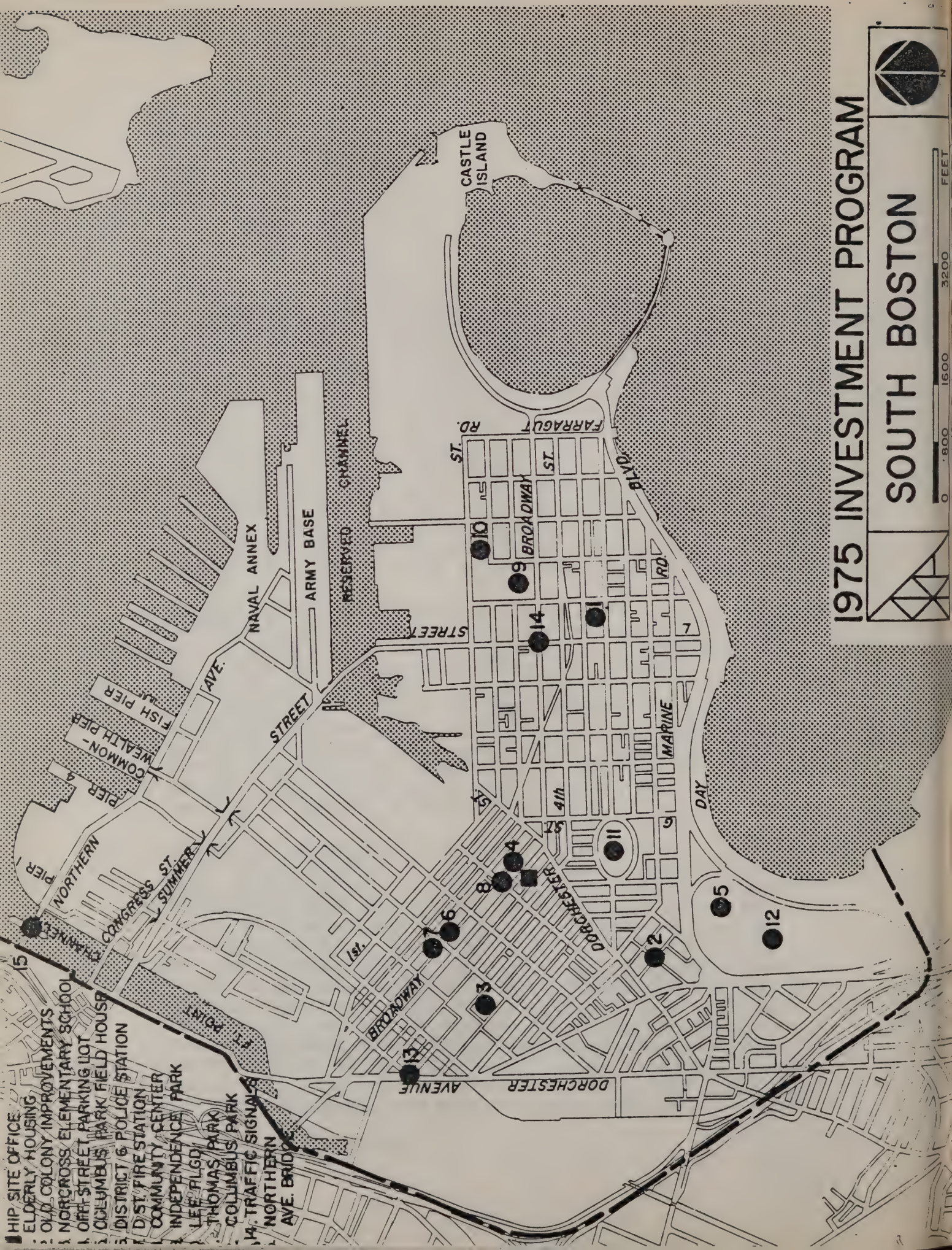
The 1975 program for South Boston includes investment in housing, public facilities, parks and recreational facilities, public works, and traffic and parking improvements. A central element of the housing investment program is the Housing Improvement Program, which provides rehabilitation incentive through each rebates to resident owners of buildings with 1-6 dwelling units. A site office for the administration of this program will be located in the South Boston Little City Hall, and funds have been reserved for the rehabilitation of approximately 100 residential buildings. Funds have also been set aside for the demolition of about 30 abandoned buildings and for the restoration of 30 vacant lots in South Boston. \$450,000 will be spent on repairs and improvements of the Old Colony housing project, and BHA of 6 residential units for the handicapped and 68 units of elderly housing.

The city is scheduled to spend over \$11,000,000 in 1975 on construction and rehabilitation of public facilities in South Boston including construction of the Norcross Elementary School (\$9,200,00), an off-street parking lot on West Broadway (\$700,000), the new D Street fire station (\$1,100,000), rehabilitation of the Columbus Park field house (\$40,000), and improvements to the District 6 Police Station (\$250,000). \$75,000 has also been set aside for first stage work on developing a new community center. The city will be doing restoration work on four parks in South Boston: Independence Park (\$135,000), Lee Playground (\$150,000), Thomas Park (\$160,000), and Columbus Park (\$180,000).

Public works improvement for South Boston includes improvements to streets, sidewalks, and water and sewer systems on over 25 streets. New traffic signals will be installed at the intersection of Dorchester Avenue, A and West Fifth Streets and at the intersection of East Broadway and L Street. \$1,000,000 will be spent on installing residential street lighting and \$110,000 on street lights for the East West Broadway business districts. 127 trees will be planted on residential streets in South Boston and 14 trees in the East Broadway business district. Additional trees will be planted as part of the off-street parking lot on West Broadway. Close to \$50,000 will be spent on a police foot patrol program for East and West Broadway commercial areas, and a similar program will be initiated to serve residential streets. \$14,000 will be spent for a mini-bus for elderly transportation. Repair of the Northern Avenue bridge is the major transportation improvement scheduled for 1975.

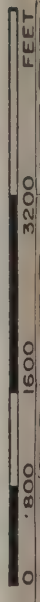


- 1 HIP SITE OFFICE
- 2 ELDERLY HOUSING
- 3 OLD COLONY IMPROVEMENTS
- 4 NORCROSS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
- 5 OFF STREET PARKING LOT
- 6 COLUMBUS PARK FIELD HOUSE
- 7 DISTRICT 6 POLICE STATION
- 8 DISTRICT 6 FIRE STATION
- 9 COMMUNITY CENTER
- 10 INDEPENDENCE PARK
- 11 LEE PLGD
- 12 THOMAS PARK
- 13 COLUMBUS PARK
- 14 TRAFFIC SIGNALS
- 15 NORTHERN AVE. BRIDGE



# 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

## SOUTH BOSTON





## F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

Future investment needs related to the preservation of housing stock include expansion of the Housing Improvement Program to assist the rehabilitation of 300 units a year, and development of a new program to provide more extensive assistance for low income homeowners in areas of concentrated deterioration. Major public investment is required to rehabilitate and maintain public housing projects in South Boston. City funds are required to continue and expand building demolition and vacant lot programs, and for capital investment in residential street improvements, street lighting and tree planting, the new community center, and for the construction of new open space and recreational facilities in the West Broadway area. Funds may also be required for necessary infrastructure improvements for new residential development.

Other investment needs include design and construction of the Seaport Access Road, the New Northern Avenue bridge and repair of the Summer Street railroad bridge, the Summer Street bridge over the Fort Point Channel, the West Fourth Street bridge, the Broadway bridge and the Dorchester Avenue bridge (connecting Boston to Dorchester).

In order to improve commercial areas, funds must be spent on additional street lighting, tree planting, and provision of street furniture, such as trash barrels and benches. To alleviate traffic congestion and improve pedestrian safety, new traffic signals, bus shelters, neckdowns and median islands are needed. Public money should also be used to stimulate private investment by providing financial incentive for storefront rehabilitation.

In order to encourage appropriate private development of vacant and under utilized land, funds may be needed for infrastructure and other public improvements.



# 6. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Residential Stability	Preservation of Housing Stock		
	HIP	HIP - \$100,000	HIP-minimum 300 units per year
	Deep rehabilitation assistance		Funds for deeper assistance
	Rehabilitate & maintain public housing projects	Rehabilitate Old Colony housing project - \$450,000	Bring projects up to code; regular maintenance; improved security measures
	Demolition of abandoned buildings which cannot be rehabilitated	Demolition of abandoned buildings - \$80,000	Funds for demolition
	Restoration, maintenance & disposition of vacant lots	Restoration of vacant lots - \$30,000; community garden permit and other vacant lot programs	Expansion of vacant lot, restoration, maintenance, disposition & community use programs
	Capital expenditure to strengthen neighborhood & resident confidence	Norcross Elem. School - \$9,200,000 D St. Fire Station - \$1,100,000 Community Center - \$75,000 Dist. 6 Police Station \$250,000 Columbus Park - \$180,000 Independence Park - \$135,000 Lee Playground - \$150,000 Thomas Park - \$160,000 Residential Lights - \$100,000	Residential street & sidewalk improvements including trees & lights additional funding for new community ctr. new open space & recreational facilities

G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Residential Stability (cont'd)		Street Improvements Residential Tree Planting - \$ 254,000 Police Foot Patrol Program	
	Control land use mix & building conversions		
	Increase availability of mortgage & home improvement money		
Incompatible Land Use	Encourage appropriate new residential devl.	BHA housing for elderly & handicapped - \$2,168,872	Transfer of city-owned land for new housing
	Control & redirect industrial expansion & prevent inappropriate uses in residential neighborhood		
Transportation	Remove truck traffic from residential sts		
	Improve truck access to existing & planned industrial areas		Design & construction of seaport access road
	Repair or replace bridges as necessary	Repair Northern Ave. Bridge - \$300,000	Repair Summer Street railroad bridge, Summer St. bridge over Fort Point Channel, W, 4th St. bridge, Broadway bridge, Dorchester Ave. bridge Replace Northern Ave bridge

G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Commercial Vitality	Assist local business organizations in commercial revitalization		Storefront rehab incentive funds
	Encourage reuse of vacant bldgs. & appropriate new devl. in Broadway commercial area		
	Study Andrew Sq. commercial area		
	Alleviate traffic congestion & access problems in commercial areas	Traffic light E. Broadway & L St. \$9,000 Off-St. parking lot \$700,000	Traffic signals, bus shelters neck downs, median islands
	Improve attractiveness and safety of Broadway commercial area	Street lights \$110,000 14 Trees \$ 3,000 Police Foot Ptl 50,000	Trees, street furniture & additional street lighting as necessary
Vacant & Underutilized Land	Encourage appropriate devl. of benefit to South Boston & the city  Make available information on vacant land to potential developers		



G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Vacant & Under-utilized Land	Coordinate provision of public facilities & services with new private development		Sewer, water, street improvements, other public facilities as necessary



47194 223

M3/B16  
RA  
75/7

pt. 15

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

DEPARTMENT  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

WORKING DRAFT

FOR  
COMMUNITY REVIEW

SOUTH COVE/CHINATOWN

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.	SHORT HISTORY	[ 3 ]
B.	EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	[ 4 ]
	Bay Village	
	Chinese Community	
C.	PAST PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT	[ 8 ]
D.	ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	[ 14 ]
	1. Impact of downtown development on Chinatown and Bay Village	
	2. Housing	
	3. Economic assistance	
	4. Capital Improvements	
	5. Air Quality in the South Cove	
E.	1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[ 18 ]
F.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS	
G.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS AS RELATED TO ISSUES, STRATEGIES AND 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[ 20 ]





## INTRODUCTION

This report is prepared by the South Cove District Planner. It is a draft document and is meant to facilitate discussion among residents and City representatives on planning strategies and investment needs.

The report does a number of things:

First, it establishes a base of population, income and housing data as well as a listing and analysis of recent past Public and Private Investment in South Cove. This information can be used by the District Planner and others who are involved in the planning process, neighborhood residents, Little City Hall Staff and other City agencies and departments.

Second, it offers an analysis of the major issues which confront the community along with recommended strategies. These strategies should form the basis of discussion for community residents for the Community Development and Capital Improvement participation process as well as for involvement in issues which are not addressed by City expenditures such as rezoning, private development or wholly funded State Programs.

Third, the report recognizes that strategies are not self-fulfilling and makes recommendations for investments, both public and private, which are necessary to help carry through the recommended strategies.



SOUTH COVE/CHINATOWN





## A. SHORT HISTORY

The South Cove/Chinese community in Boston is in an area that was created by the filling of the tidal flats on either side of Washington Street, the Roxbury neck that connected the original Boston peninsula with the town of Roxbury. Bay Village, and the streets to the west of Washington Street were once part of the Back Bay, and the streets to the east of Washington Street were part of the original harbor. In the early 1800's filling started on both sides of Washington Street and significant development started to take place in the 1830's. The original development schemes and street layouts were directed towards industrial uses, but an economic decline in the late 1830's slowed development, and resulted in a shift of use to almost exclusively residential. Over the years Bay Village has retained much of the scale and character of the original development, and there have not been significant changes in the middle of the Bay Village area. The rest of the area has undergone much more change over the last century. Industrial development did occur in the South Cove area, and eventually a haphazard land use pattern evolved with railroads, leather and garment manufactures, and a wide variety of commercial and institutional uses mixed in with the residential area. The area became the home for successive waves of Irish, Jewish, Syrian, and finally Chinese immigrants. The Chinese arrived in about 1890 and have been the predominant residents of the area since then.

For most of the twentieth century, South Cove could be characterized as an area in slow decline; as industries left the area, and the quality of housing stock gradually declined. In the last 20 years more dramatic changes have started to take place in the area. The construction of the South East Expressway and the Massachusetts Turnpike were the first signs of change, and for the residents of the area they were an unwelcome development. The road construction took much of the housing occupied by Chinese community, introduced many more automobiles into the immediate area, and radically separated the South End from South Cove, splitting the Chinese community.

The South Cove Urban Renewal Project begun in 1966, and was aimed at accommodating the increased needs of the Tufts New England Medical Center, and the need to replace much of the deteriorated existing housing that remained south of Kneeland Street. As a result considerable demolition and relocation took place, and the Chinese community moved geographically from its original location. Likewise the scale of the area has changed from one of 3 to 5 story rowhouses to a mix of rowhouses, 10 to 20 story housing developments, and institutional buildings.

The recent physical changes in the Chinese community, have coincided with, but are unrelated to increasing numbers of immigrants arriving from Taiwan and Hong Kong in the last ten years due to changes in the U.S. immigration laws. This has changed the demographic mix of the community, and has caused a severe housing shortage in and near the heart of the Chinese community.



## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

The compilation of statistical data on the South Cove/Chinatown area is difficult due to the small size of the area and because the area is split between two large census tracts. The information that is known is from the "Census Information By Blocks" and other demographic surveys that have been done. In the Chinese community the accurate statistics on population, housing, and other information is very difficult to derive. The Chinese community is largely made up of first generation Americans, and it is estimated that between 60 and 80% of the population do not speak English. This factor coupled with an unknown number of illegal aliens, and many residents reluctant to have anything to do with the government make information gathering very difficult.

For definition purposes, the Chinese community is bounded by the expressway, Essex Street, Harrison Avenue, Kneeland Street, Tyler Street, Oak Street, Tremont Street and the Massachusetts Pike, the Bay Village area is that area bounded by Tremont Street, Stuart Street, Columbus Avenue, and the Massachusetts Pike and includes Cortes and Isabella Streets.



# SUB-AREAS





## BAY VILLAGE

Although the character of the center of Bay Village has changed very little from the time the streets were laid out and the houses built in the middle of the 1800's, the extremities of the area has gradually been encroached upon by commercial and institutional uses and the number of houses in the area is only about half of what it once was. The predominant character of the area is still 3 and 4 story rowhouses on small streets. It is Bay Village's relation to the rest of the City however, that has undergone great change over the years. The area has gone from an outlying residential suburb to being right in the middle of the downtown. The area in recent years has become a very urban neighborhood with many different life styles and income groups. The residents enjoy living in a small neighborhood, but also like being within the downtown core. The population nowadays is small with only 900 people in the area. There is a low degree of resident ownership, with only 10% of the buildings being owner-occupied. The condition of the housing stock is quite good, both due to a large number of federally funded low interest loans under the BRA's renewal efforts and a strong rental market that has encouraged owners to continue investing in their properties.

## CHINESE COMMUNITY

The Chinese community in the South Cove has undergone significant changes in the last decade both physically and socially. Since 1960 there has been a steady decline in population from about 4,000 to only 1,600 in 1970 due to the construction of the expressway, the Turnpike, and the initial demolition in the South Cove Urban Renewal project. In the last 5 years the population has started to rise again with construction of 660 units of housing in the area and the rehabilitation and conversion of other units. Presently the best estimate is that there are nearly 3,000 Chinese in the neighborhood. The Chinese population in Boston and elsewhere in the U.S. has been rising rapidly due to changes in immigration laws that have allowed many more Chinese families to immigrate into this country. The recent immigration has changed the social character of the community which up until now was somewhat characterized by single, middle aged and elderly men. Generally, the new families are larger than the city-wide average. Overall the community is poor, with the average family income in 1970 being \$5,400, and 63% of the families earning less than \$6,000. The heavy demand for housing near the heart of the community, the lack of enough new housing, and the low incomes have resulted in a housing shortage. The 1970 census showed that 72% of the households had more than 1.01 persons room vs the city average of approximately 10%.

The Community has particular problems in the job market, due to the large number of people who do not speak English, 60 to 80%. The few opportunities for employment are in the area and metropolitan Chinese restaurants and in the neighboring garment industry. The estimated rate of unemployment is low, however the unofficial opinion of neighborhood workers is that much of the population is underemployed. In recent years the Chinese community has felt increasingly pressured from potential encroachment of the expanding downtown office and entertainment districts.



# COMPARATIVE STATISTICS - SOUTH COVE/CHINATOWN

Population	South Cove Bay Village	South Cove Chinese	Beach Street	District
Total 1975 (estimate)	900	1,900	900	3,700
Total 1970	880	750	900	2,530
Change from 1960-1975	-630	-400	+200	-800
Total Chinese 1970		700	900	1,600
<u>Income</u>				
Median Family		5,100	5,100	
% families under \$5,000		48	48	
<u>Housing</u>				
Total DU's (75)	552	584	250	1,386
Units needing (75) \$1,000+	5-10%		50-75%	
Owner occupied	65		48	

### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Capital expenditures in the South Cove/Chinatown area over the last ten years have been modest, and most of the work that has been accomplished has been within the South Cove Urban Renewal area. Since the project is still in execution, and much of the project improvements remain to be done, the reported effort is deceptive. At the time of project completion (est. 1976-1977) all of the streets in the residential areas will have had complete street rebuilding and many of the streets will have new utility systems. To date \$6.7 million has been obligated on project improvements, with \$3.5 million work yet to be done. North of Kneeland Street there has been scattered street resurfacing, and street lighting on about half of the streets. The capital expenditures have been limited to the construction of Pagoda Park, in the recent past. At the present time, the Quincy Community School is under construction (\$10 million), two new parks are under design and improvements have been funded for Pagoda Park.

Public effort in housing has been the construction of two HUD assisted housing developments with 414 units of housing; 215 units of housing rehabilitated through the '312' rehabilitation assistance program, and the renovation of 20 units of housing through the MHFA. At the present time, an assisted elderly housing project with 96 units is under construction, and two to three hundred units of housing are in various stages of discussion and planning through a number of different programs.

### PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

A review of building permits for the years 1970 thru 1974 reveals that a large dollar amount of construction has taken place in the South Cove/Chinatown area; and that the vast majority of the work has taken place within the Urban Renewal area. Most of the construction has been nonresidential, with the Tufts-New England Medical Center the major builder. Renovation work by Tufts and other commercial interests in the renewal area and the construction of the Howard Johnson complex are the other major developments. Investment in residential property has primarily been thru the government assisted rehabilitation program, and this work has primarily occurred in the Bay Village area. There has been almost no new investment in the area of Chinatown outside of the renewal area, and the work that has been accomplished has been rehabilitation of existing structures. At the present time, there is not a great deal of private development going on in the area. This is partially due to the general downturn in the economy, the fact that there is little more work needed in the Bay Village area, and that the economics of the majority of Chinese residential and commercial property is such that investment in the properties is often not possible.





PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1968-74

SOUTH COVE/CHINATOWN



- STREET RESURFACING
- STREET & SIDEWALKS
- SEWER & WATER
- LIGHTING





PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1968-74

SOUTH COVE / CHINATOWN

- RENOVATED NEW
- RESIDENTIAL
  - COMMERCIAL
  - INSTITUTIONAL





PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74

SOUTH COVE/CHINATOWN



- 1. PAGODA PARK
- 2. COLUMBUS AVE. FIRE STATION

## HOUSING

### Public

236 & 221d3

Tai tung village

214 units, fam. (1973)

Mass. Pike Towers

200 units, fam. (1973)

Wong Family Trust

24 units, fam. MHFA rehab (73)

Chauncy House

### In Planning or Construction

Quincy Towers

100 units, eld. (76)

R3/R3a

100-200 units (80)

R1

120 Bed Nursing Home (77)

Chinese Christian  
Life Center

90 units, eld. (77)

Edinboro St. rehab(s)

(MHFA preliminary discussion)

### 312 Rehabilitation Assistance Program

215 units to date





# HOUSING PROGRAMS 1968-74

SOUTH COVE/CHINATOWN

- 215 UNITS VIA '312' PROGRAM
- EXISTING 236
- PROPOSED 236
- ▲ EXISTING MHFA REHAB
- △ PROPOSED MHFA REHAB
- OTHER - PROPOSED

## D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

### 1. IMPACT OF DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT ON CHINATOWN AND BAY VILLAGE

#### Issue

The South Cove/Chinatown neighborhood is unique in that while a very residential neighborhood, it is almost in the middle of the Downtown office and commercial core. The continued development and the expansion of the downtown has brought a number of real and potential problems to the adjacent residential area. The threat of land speculation and development pressures to the point that the land would be too valuable for residential use is very real, and combined with the liberal allowable uses in some of the zoning districts, the threat is now upon parts of the communities. Elsewhere the threat of speculation is more of a future concern. The potential of the entertainment district expanding, and the problems of the area are a concern. The threat of the Garment Industry, which is a major employer of Chinese women, being forced to move due to real estate pressure is now a very real possibility. The spinoff effects of continuing growth including increasing traffic congestion, construction activities and constant street disruptions from utility companies are a constant source of complaint.

#### Strategy

The strategy to insure coordinated and compatible growth in the whole downtown is a very complex issue, and the strategies are still in a preliminary discussion stage. Among the policies being proposed are the possible use of one or more zoning tools including a zoning rollback to a less permissive category, the delineation of a conservation district for the whole neighborhood, and/or a historic zone for Bay Village. The reaffirmation of the City to its commitment to the protection and assistance to the Chinese community could be used to dampen real estate speculation. The City can assist the garment industry through the coordination of city services, the provision of needed public improvements, and/or possibly the assistance in relocating in the immediate area. The funding of capital improvements that will improve and strengthen the residential area will serve to reinforce the City's commitment to strengthen the residential areas.

### 2. HOUSING

#### Issue

The housing situation in the Chinese community at the present time is very poor, and unique among the city's neighborhoods. In spite of the fact that some of the housing in the Beach Street area is very run down and in need of major improvements, there is a very strong demand for any form of housing in that area. Furthermore, a large percentage of the population is in a very low income range, and can only afford the lowest of rents. A large percentage of the population works in the Beach Street area, and needs to be near the area to do shopping



as well as goods and services, since between 60 and 80% of the population does not speak English. Added pressure on the housing market comes from a constant arrival of new residents from Taiwan and Hong Kong. At the present time, there is a high degree of overcrowding in the area, and very little the city-wide programs like HIP or code enforcement can do to assist the area. Much of the housing is characterized by several (more than 6) units per building and they are often absentee owned.

### Strategy

The many and unique elements of the housing problems in the Chinese community do not lend themselves to solving via existing or proposed city-wide housing strategies. To properly address the housing problems of the Chinese community, it is proposed that a specific housing program be developed. This effort will as its' end result be intended to identify existing and new strategies of improving and expanding the housing in the community without forcing out the present residents. Among the specific proposals to be investigated will be rehabilitation programs for large, absentee owned buildings, coordinated rental subsidies, various inducements to convert non-residential buildings to housing, and alternative forms of tenant participation in the ownership of their housing.

## 3. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

### Issue

The Chinese community suffers from a combination of economic problems that as a net result have caused the residents of the area to have the lowest median income in the City, few alternatives to employment outside of the local restaurants and garment industries, and very limited opportunities for local business expansion. The causes of the problem include a large immigrant population that often does not speak English and often has low marketable skills. In turn, business opportunities to date have been limited to the restaurant business and what few local services the community needs, and the community has not participated in the expansion of the downtown office/service economy.

### Strategy

The main strategy is to bring a coordinated and comprehensive effort to bear on the problem of economic development in the community. Among the activities proposed is close city cooperation with the newly formed Chinese Economic Development Council. The City must make an effort to assist the garment industry and ensure that it remains in the nearby area. The City must encourage the expansion of Chinese employment opportunities and expanded business opportunities. Among the programs that should be pursued are the City's Commercial Center Revitalization Program. The promotion of mixed uses in new or rehabilitated housing should be explored. The effort in job training and English language instruction should be expanded.



#### 4. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

##### Issue

Due to the very dense development, proximity to the downtown core, and lack of open space and public amenities, the residential environment of the community is not particularly good at the present time, especially in the Chinese community. While street lighting has been and is a capital program, the overall pattern of lighting leaves much to be desired. There is virtually no street landscaping in the community, and the only park is rather inaccessible and very limited.

##### Strategy

The Capital Improvements strategy calls for the majority of the expenditures to be residentially related improvements. Street lighting should be continued onto Edinboro, Kingston, Harrison, and the Over Artery. Street trees for screening are proposed along the expressway and the turnpike, and along Kneeland street. Sidewalk improvements including benches and pedestrian improvements are proposed for Beach Street. Additional funding will be required over and above the 1975 CIP to make the Beach Street passive area a symbolic entrance to the community. The feasibility of using all or part of parcels R3/R3a for an active recreation area for the community and the adjacent community school should be investigated.

#### 5. AIR QUALITY IN THE SOUTH COVE

##### Issue

Recent reviews by HUD of housing projects in the South Cove have raised the question of the air quality in the area, and specifically, the suitability of the area as a residential area. The opinions to date have been based on what appears to be very sketchy data, and the conclusions are very open to question. However, the issue has been raised, and the time to investigate air quality is not at the end of the planning on each specific housing proposal. The threat of HUD delay or rejection because of air quality reasons makes housing that much harder to get built in the area.

##### Strategy

It is proposed that the City apply to the Environmental Protection Agency for \$20,000 to undertake a detailed testing and analysis of the existing air quality conditions, projection of future conditions, and finally a detailed analysis of the turnpike and expressway corridors for suitability of housing on a site by site basis. Furthermore it is proposed that the community be made aware of the problems of adverse air quality and be encouraged to lobby for this study, as well as implementation of measures to improve the air quality in the downtown.

E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The investment program in the South Cove/Chinatown area is primarily aimed at improving the environment in and around the residential areas. The City's Capital Improvement Program includes the improvement and expansion of the Beach Street passive recreation area, and improvements to Pagoda Park. The old Quincy School will be donated for a Chinese community center, and the new Quincy School will have extensive community facilities. The provision of new street lights will be continued on three streets in the Beach Street area, as well as the complete rebuilding of several streets in the Hudson-Tyler Streets area as part of the Urban Renewal Project improvements. The Chinese community has been targeted for \$75,000 in HIP effort.



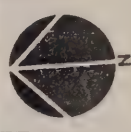


# 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

SOUTH COVE / CHINATOWN

- 1. 94 UNITS-ELDERLY HOUSING (HUD)
  - 2. NEW QUINCY SCHOOL
  - 3. OLD QUINCY SCHOOL
  - 4. SOUTH COVE PLAZA
  - 5. PAGODA PARK
  - 6. BEACH STREET
- STREET IMPROVEMENTS  
● LIGHTING





SOUTH COVE / CHINATOWN



# CURRENT ISSUES

- ||||| IMPACT OF DOWNTOWN AIR QUALITY
- PRIVATE UTILITY CONSTRUCTION DISRUPTION
- ... HOUSING ASSISTANCE NEEDS

# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
<u>Housing</u>			
a) Quality of the existing stock is very poor			
b) overcrowding due to housing shortage & very low incomes			
c) continuing influx of new res. who due to language & skills disadvantage must live near Chinatown			
	Develop Housing Program for Chinese Community		
	1) Preservation of Existing Housing		
	a) MHIP type prog.	\$75k, 50 units	Street, open space improvements near housing
	b) Rental subsidies		Renovation assistance for non-resident owners with income tenants
	c) MHFA Rehab	MHFA interest on Edinboro Street	Rental assistance (Sec. 8 Sec. 707)
	2) develop additional housing for increasing population	Quincy Towers-114 unit eld. Christian Life Center	
<u>Economic Assistance</u>			
Low median income (\$5,400/fam.)	Expanded job training (including new development)		
Limited skills, language problems	Coordinate public improvements		



# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
employment opportunities	Encourage garment industry to remain near the community		
	Promote mixed use rehabs		
Garment dist. needs	improved parking		Use of Jordan/Lafayette garage
Commercial area	Encourage expansion of commercial activity		Street lights, neck downs, neighborhood commercial assistance
<u>Impact of Downtown Development on China-Town &amp; Bay Village</u>			
Land speculation due to Jordans, downtown expansion, etc.	zoning rollback -Conservation District City Policy Statement Historic District for Bay Village		Chinatown Housing Policy  City committment to future residential improvements, amenities
Perception by residents of potential expansion of entertainment district.	Liquor license policy  Public Relations Program to reiterate City's policy		
Relocation of Garment District	City assistance in relocation, planning		Land assembly, relocation assistance; transportation assistance
Traffic, Parking pedestrian circulation	Close Beach Street  Improve Kneeland St. pedestrian crossings	\$50,000 in '76' CIP  \$2.8 million U.R. Improve- ments to Kneeland/Stuart	Add'l capital improvements to Beach & adjacent Streets Pedestrian Actuated lights, neck-downs



# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Construction disruption from private utilities	- City insistence on coordinated planning		
<u>Capital Improvements</u>			
Recreation & open space	Improve existing facilities Develop small open areas Convert Old Quincy School to communicate	Beach St. \$50,000 in '76' CIP Pagoda Park S. Cove Plaza \$600,000  City to donate Old Quincy School for community use	Improve access to Pagoda Park State DPW assistance for Beach Street passive area  \$3-400,000 for temp. ball-field on R3/R3A While 'E1' is still up  Urban Design treatment for Beach Street
Streets & sidewalks	Continue Street Program Improve ped. system Coordinate street signing	U.R. Street Improvements	Develop Parcel RI for mini
<u>Air Quality in the Downtown</u>	Study existing & future condition Raise community awareness of the issue Reduce local & thru Traffic thru street closings, traffic rerouting		\$10-20,000 for air quality study of Mass. Pike/X.way corridor

M3/B16  
RA  
75/7  
pt. 16

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS  
DEPARTMENT  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

WORKING DRAFT  
FOR  
COMMUNITY REVIEW

BMA-0164

SOUTH END

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June, 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.	SHORT HISTORY	[2]
B.	EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS	[4]
C.	PAST PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT	[12]
D.	ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES	[19]
	1. Housing Rehabilitation	
	2. Maintaining the Present Resource of Newly Constructed and Rehabilitated Subsidized Housing	
	3. Transportation	
	4. Commercial Revitalization	
	5. Industrial Revitalization	
	6. Public Improvements	
E.	1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[27]
F.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS	[29]
G.	FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS AS RELATED TO ISSUES, STRATEGIES AND 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	[30]



## INTRODUCTION

This report prepared by the Boston Redevelopment Authority is a draft document meant to form the basis of discussion among residents and City representatives on planning strategies and investment needs.

Towards this end, it establishes a base of population, income and housing data as well as a listing and analysis of recent past public and private investment in the South End. This information can be used by the Project Director, District Planner and others who are involved in the planning process - neighborhood residents, Little City Hall Staff and other City agencies and departments.

Second, it offers an analysis of the major issues which confront the community along with recommended strategies. These strategies should form the basis of discussion for community residents for the Community Development Block Grant and Capital Improvement participation process as well as for involvement in issues which are not addressed by City expenditures such as rezoning, private development or State-funded Programs.

Third, the report recognizes that strategies are not self-fulfilling and makes recommendations for investments, both public and private, which are necessary to help carry through the recommended strategies.



## A. SHORT HISTORY

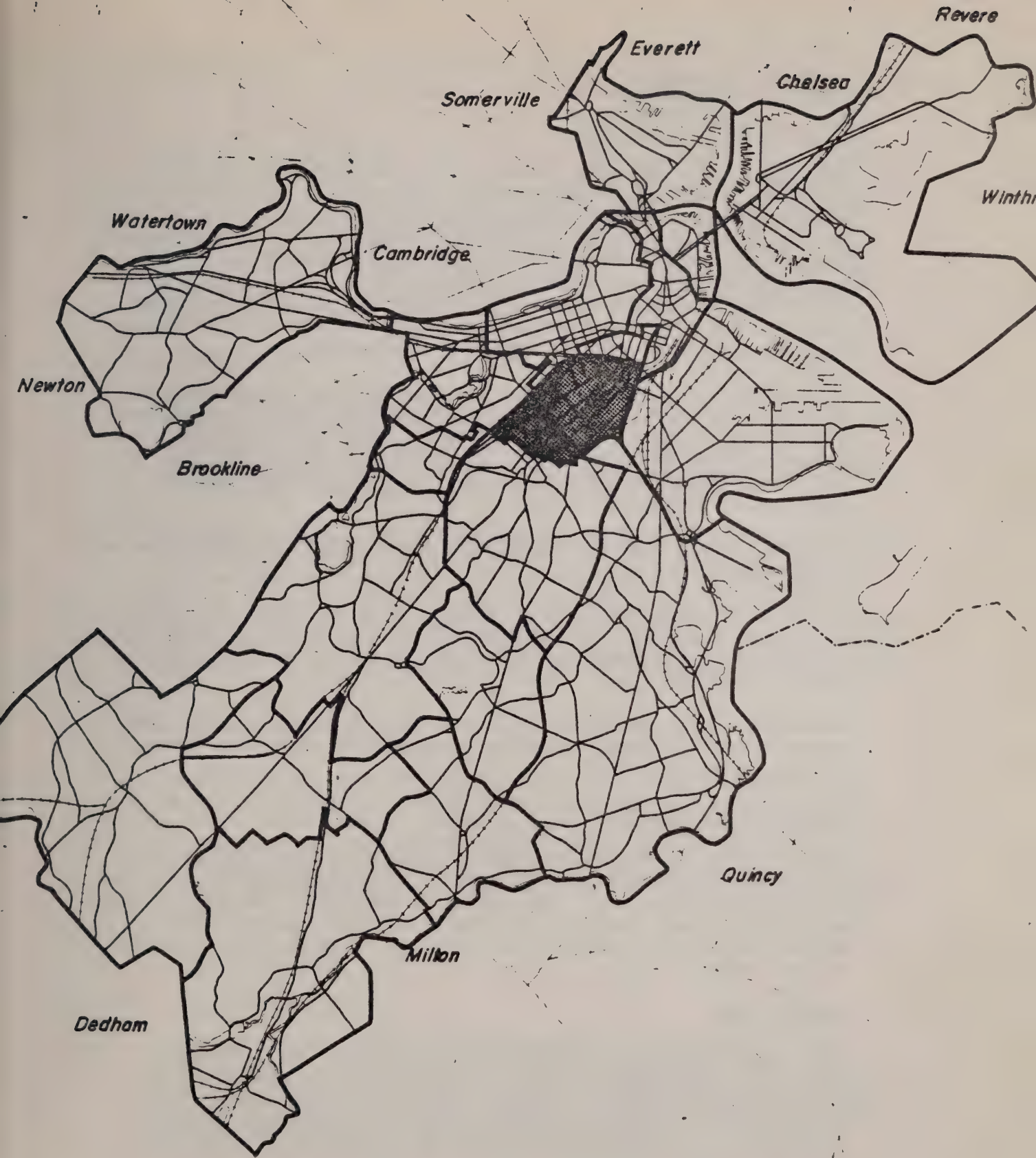
Developed more than a century ago as a wealthy residential community, the South End quickly succumbed under the stresses of the financial panic of 1873 and the subsequent emergence of the Back Bay as Boston's most fashionable neighborhood. The elegant Victorian single family townhouses were rapidly converted into way stations for poor immigrants and into lodging houses for the dispossessed.

By the late 1950's, the South End had become a microcosm of mid-twentieth century urban life, plagued with the problems of dwindling population, poverty and decay that typified old inner-city neighborhoods throughout the country. Yet for many of its residents, the district was a viable, low rent area of the city for the lodging house tenants, the elderly, first and second generation families of middle- and far-eastern origin, and the recently arrived Southern Blacks and Spanish-speaking, concentrated for the most part in homogeneous enclaves and sub-communities scattered throughout the area.

Some form of community renewal was urgently needed, however, and in 1960, the key to the Development Program was the rehabilitation of Boston's deteriorating neighborhoods. The focus of Urban Renewal in the South End was rehabilitation on a very large scale.

Unlike most other urban neighborhoods, however the South End had a unique architectural integrity, coupled with its proximity to downtown, that provided the potential for the development of an attractive middle- and upper-middle class neighborhood. By the mid-1960's, private developers and higher-income families were beginning to purchase and rehabilitate the old brick townhouses in substantial numbers.

After four years of extensive negotiations, the Urban Renewal Plan was approved in 1965, and, feared by some and encouraged by others, the arduous and lengthy process of implementation began. In attempting to be responsive to a multiplicity of interests within the community as a whole, the Plan set forth two primary objectives that were in apparent contradiction with one another: <the rehabilitation of existing housing, and insuring the availability of standard housing at rentals that all displaced low income residents wishing to remain in the South End could afford.> To this end, over 4,000 low and moderate income apartments have been built or rehabilitated, and schools, parks and extensive public improvements have been or are in the process of being completed. Yet, after a decade of renewal activity, the seeming incompatibility of these two primary objectives remains a continuing source of conflict between the diverse factions within the community.



SOUTH END





## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

### Urban Renewal

The actual impact of urban renewal on the South End is extremely difficult to measure. The district's proximity to the Prudential complex and downtown has resulted in a pronounced upgrading of the existing housing stock by the private sector, and it is more than likely that much of this activity would have occurred even if the South End had not been declared a project area. While both public and private action has caused the displacement of many low income families, the city-wide trend of out-migration over the past decade has also diminished a large segment of the population.

In a major effort to ensure that standard housing is made available to poorer residents, the public sector has been largely responsible for the construction and rehabilitation of over 4,000 low and moderate income dwelling units. It is safe to assume that few, if any, subsidized units would have been built were it not for the availability of renewal funds.

To date, average rehabilitation costs in the South End have exceeded \$9,000 per dwelling unit.

Moreover, of the 3,500 units rehabilitated in the South End, about 60 percent have been financed conventionally at a cost of about \$16 million, while the remaining 40 percent of subsidized rehab cost about \$15 million.

Furthermore, the demand for low income elderly housing within the community has largely been met by the recent completion of several Turnkey projects.

### Conditions and Quality

The condition of the housing stock is generally sound throughout the district, although deterioration is more pronounced and frequent in the Southerly sector. The quality is excellent, and most of the South End has been declared an historic district and is on the National Register, one effect of which may be to increase property values further.

### Market Trends

Only 10 percent of the stock is owner-occupied, and while almost half of the population is Black, only 2 percent of the houses are occupied by Black owners. In the northerly sector, adjacent to Copley Square, reverse filtration has and is continuing to occur. Speculation is increasing, with many row-houses being purchased by absentee owners, resulting in the displacement of many of the



existing tenants. This area is, for the most part, white and middle class. In the southerly sector, however, particularly in Lower Roxbury, the market has "bottomed out." There has been some abandonment, and, even if mortgage money were available, it is doubtful if this area would benefit substantially, as a result of the low incomes of the predominantly black residents, and current lending policies of local banks. Some community development organizations have successfully rehabilitated several hundred units in this area, which has brought about a certain degree of stabilization but no significant upswing--there are too many sellers (or potential sellers) and not enough buyers. Fix-up costs are higher and incomes are lower, indicating a greater need for subsidized rents and repairs.

### Lodging Houses

For almost a century, the lodging houses in the South End have provided low-rent accommodations to many of the community's poorer residents. The last decade has witnessed a sharp decline in the number of lodging house units as the result of revised assessment policies and increased conversions to market rentals.

Worcester Square, once a concentrated lodging house area, has experienced a sharp conversion rate to high income apartments to accommodate staff from Boston City Hospital and Boston University Medical Centers. While 16 percent of the people in the city of Boston are below the poverty level (1970 census), 31 percent of all South End residents are in this category. In addition, the unemployment rate for the South End is 50 percent higher than that for the City of Boston.

### South End Housing Report

In conjunction with the BRA and CHPA, and at the request of the Mayor, the South End Project Area committee is preparing a comprehensive report on the current housing situation in the South End. In response to a preliminary report issued by the BRA in April, 1974 and based on 3 months of testimony gathered at a series of public hearings, the final version will be released in early Summer of 1975.

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

#### Population Shifts

Although the population of the South End declined from 57,000 in 1950 to 23,000 in 1970, the racial distribution has remained relatively stable since 1960. Today the ratio is about 46 percent white, 40 percent Black and 12 percent oriental. Spanish-speaking residents constitute about 7 percent of the population.

As of 1970, 66 percent of the households in the South End are single person households, and about three-quarters of all households are eligible for subsidized housing.

Within the white population, the number of higher income professionals has increased, while there has been a decline in the lower income and working class segments, as well as in the number of elderly poor. The median family income rose 66 percent from 1960 to 1970 (from \$3,650 to \$6,050), reflecting the recent influx of middle class residents and the outward movement of poorer households. This influx, for the most part, is due to the proximity of the South End to the Prudential Center, Copley Square and Back Bay to the northwest, as well as the rapid increase in the amount of new office space in the Central Business District, and has resulted in a sharp rise in property values in large sections of the area.

#### Demographic Projections 1970-1985

Continued market rate rental rehabilitation will result in an increase of middle income single persons which will more than offset losses due to rooming house conversions. At the same time, subsidized new construction and rehabilitation, as well as the increased attractiveness of the South End to middle income families interested in being homeowners, will result in an increase in the number of persons in families.

A small decrease in the elderly population is expected over the next ten years, as the result of conversions and increased elderly housing opportunities which will become available in other areas of the city. The South End, however, is still expected to have a higher proportion of elderly persons than the city as a whole.

Finally, median family income in the South End is expected to increase substantially by 1985, as measured by dollars of constant value. This will be a result of both real income increases for lower income residents and continued immigration of middle upper income families. Despite this projected increase, the South End median family income will be 15 percent less than the city median and the third lowest of all planning districts.



# DEMOGRAPHIC DATA - SOUTH END

<u>Population By Household Type</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1960</u>
Total Population	22,758	34,996
Families	15,184 (67%)	22,334 (64%)
Individuals	7,574 (33%)	12,665 (36%)

<u>Household Composition</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1960</u>
Total Households	11,526	19,052
Families	3,952 (34%)	6,440 (34%)
Individuals	7,574 (66%)	12,612 (66%)

<u>Median Income</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1960</u>
	\$6,464	\$ 3,615

## 1970 DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY INCOME BY ETHNIC GROUPS

	<u>All Families</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Chinese et al</u>	<u>Blacks</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>
Under \$5,000	1574 (40%)	284 (24%)	226 (37%)	851 (41%)	213 (62%)
\$5,000-\$10,000	1376 (35%)	368 (31%)	231 (38%)	665 (36%)	112 (33%)
\$10,000 plus	1002 (25%)	534 (45%)	148 (25%)	303 (17%)	17 (5%)
Total	3952	1186	605	1819	342
Median Income	\$6,426	\$9,212	\$6,666	\$5,312	\$4,038

40% of all families had incomes below \$5,000 in 1970.

## AGE OF ALL PEOPLE AND RELATIVE CHANGE 1960-1970

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>Rate of Loss, 60-70</u>
Under 25 Years	8,344 (37%)	10,855 (31%)	23%
25 to 34	3,379 (15%)	4,305 (12%)	22%
35 to 54	5,265 (23%)	9,422 (27%)	44%
55 to 64	2,450 (11%)	4,797 (14%)	49%
65 plus	3,320 (14%)	5,617 (16%)	41%

Median:   34 years           40 years

## HOUSING

### Town House Stock

<u>Units</u>	<u>Standard</u>	<u>Substandard</u>	<u>Total</u>
Dwelling Units	4,650 (64%)	2,600 (36%)	7,250
Lodging House Units	1,800 (51%)	1,750 (49%)	3,550
Total Units	6,450 (60%)	4,350 (40%)	

owner occupied units:   10%



RENTER'S INCOME

	<u>\$5,000 or less</u>	<u>\$5-10,000</u>	<u>\$10,000 +</u>
South End	62.3%	27.3%	9.9%
Boston	41.0%	35.1%	23.9%

THE SUBSIDIZED INVENTORY

<u>Existing Housing</u>	<u>Total Units</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Market</u>
New Family	1,653	429	1,224	--
Rehabilitation	1,351	770	534	47
Leased In				
Private Housing	9	9	--	--
Public Housing	886	886	--	--
New Elderly	537	537	--	--
Total	4,436	2,631	1,758	47
<u>In the Pipeline:</u>	<u>Total Units</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Market</u>
	796	253	367	85

of the 13,876 housing units in the South End, approximately 5,000 subsidized units have been built or rehabilitated, or 36 percent to the total stock.

## Northerly Sector

Located adjacent to Copley Square and the Prudential Complex, this area of the South End has experienced considerable change during the past decade. Although the 1970 census indicates a population decline of 33 percent, a substantially larger number either moved voluntarily or were dislocated by public and private renewal activity, and were replaced by middle- and upper-income residents. Despite this trend, one third of the families earn less than \$5,000, as well as a large number of single person households. The area is predominantly white, and has a higher family income than the southerly sector. There has also been a 15 percent decrease in the Black population.

<u>Total 1970</u>	<u>Change '60-70</u>	<u>Black '60</u>	<u>Black '70</u>	<u>% Over 60</u>	<u>0-17</u>
13,026	-33%	40%	25%	20%	20%

<u>Median Income</u>	<u>% Families Under \$5,000</u>
*	33%

<u>*Families</u>	<u>Unrelated Individuals</u>	<u>Families and Individuals</u>
\$6,846-\$12,039	\$1,827-\$3,904	\$4,383-\$6,172

## Housing

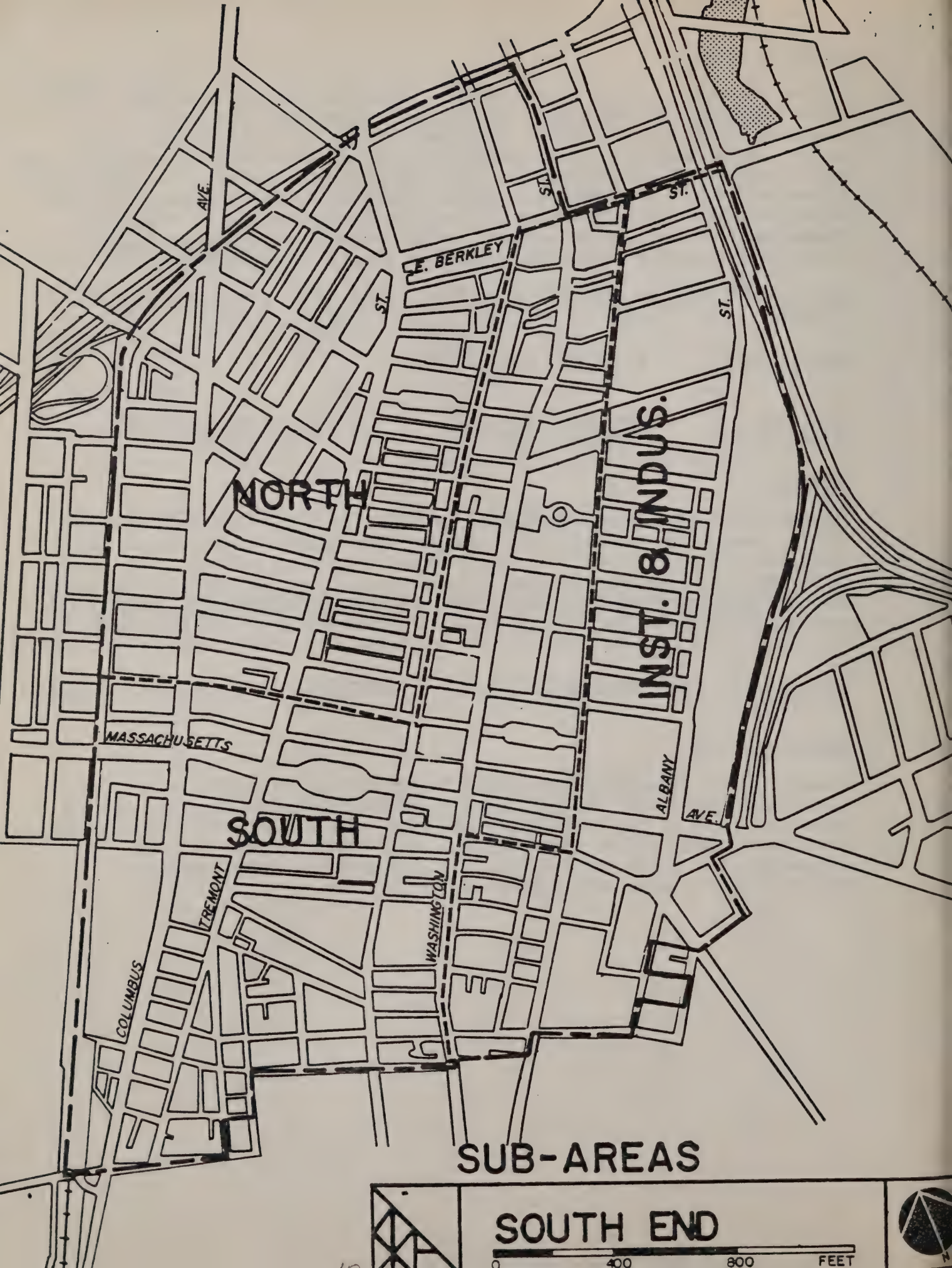
The quality of construction throughout this area is high. Conditions are fair to good as the result of the extensive rehabilitation that has been undertaken over the past 10 years. Property values have risen as much as 400 percent in the Appleton, Lawrence, Dartmouth area, and there is considerable speculation. Absentee owners are on the increase, and many existing tenants are being displaced as the old townhouses are rehabilitated for market rentals. Any subsidized units foreclosed in this area will surely be lost because of their market value potential.

<u>Total D.U.'s</u>	<u>Units Needing Over \$1,000</u>	<u>Owner Occ.</u>	<u>% Units in 1-2 Families</u>
6,100	2,600 (42%)	17%	15%

## Commercial Areas

Tremont Street, between Herald and West Newton Street, is stable, with a 6 percent vacancy rate. Several Spanish-speaking stores have opened along its borders adjacent to the Puerto Rican community. The structural quality is sound, but there has been little rehabilitation, to indicate the area's recent prosperity. The Center for the Arts will likely have a strong impact in this area with respect to commercial revitalization.





NORTH

INST. & INDUS.

MASSACHUSETTS

SOUTH

COLUMBUS

TREMONT

WASHINGTON

E. BERKLEY

ALBANY

SUB-AREAS

SOUTH END

0 400 800 FEET



## Southerly Sector

### Population

This section of the South End experienced a population decline of more than one third between 1960 and 1970, but the Black population increased from 47 percent to 57 percent. Half of the families earn less than \$5,000 per year, and there are more children in this sector than in the one previously discussed. There has been a substantial increase in the Chinese and Spanish-speaking population, and there is a small but tightly-knit Syrian-Lebanese-Greek enclave to the east.

<u>Total 1970</u>	<u>Change '60-70</u>	<u>Black '60</u>	<u>Black '70</u>	<u>% Over 60</u>	<u>0-17</u>
\$9,579	-38%	47%	57%	18%	36%

<u>Median Income</u>	<u>% Families Under 5,000</u>
*	50%

<u>*Family</u>	<u>Unrelated Individuals</u>	<u>Fam. and Ind.</u>
\$3,971-\$8,965	\$1,682-\$3,132	\$3,480-\$5,177

### Housing

Structural quality is generally sound throughout, although long vacant buildings in the Lower Roxbury area have deteriorated severely. There is some abandonment, although this is to be expected in the wake of renewal.

In addition to two public housing projects, most of the subsidized housing has been built or rehabilitated in this area. The market has bottomed out, with only 4 percent of the structures being owner occupied. Several subsidized developments are experiencing financial difficulties, but it is unlikely that they can be converted to market rentals due to their locations. One recently completed elderly project has experienced difficulty in renting up because of its location in a high crime area.

<u>Total D.U.'s</u>	<u>Units Needing Over \$1,000</u>	<u>Owner Occ.</u>	<u>% Units In 1-2 Families</u>
4,650	3,600 (78%)	176 (4%)	6%

### Commercial Centers and Activity

Mass. Ave. at Tremont and Washington Streets are the major commercial areas in this sector. Their vacancy rate ranges between 20-37 percent, and the low purchasing power of the residents in the surrounding neighborhoods is not likely to change in the future. Many of the new Commercial spaces on the ground floors of recently constructed subsidized developments have a high vacancy rate due to the high rents.

C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Since 1965, \$90 million has been spent in the South End, primarily through the renewal program. This investment has included funds for the South End library, City Hospital, the Blackstone Square Elementary School, several parks, new streets, sidewalks, street lighting and sewer and water line construction or reconstruction. In response to the need for low and moderate income dwelling units the BRA, with community support and approval, has given top priority to the provision of subsidized housing. Approximately 3000 units of housing were constructed, financed primarily by federal housing programs. Another 1350 units were rehabilitated utilizing public subsidies including federal section 312 loans. Approximately 300 additional units primarily for low and moderate income renters are in various stages of development.

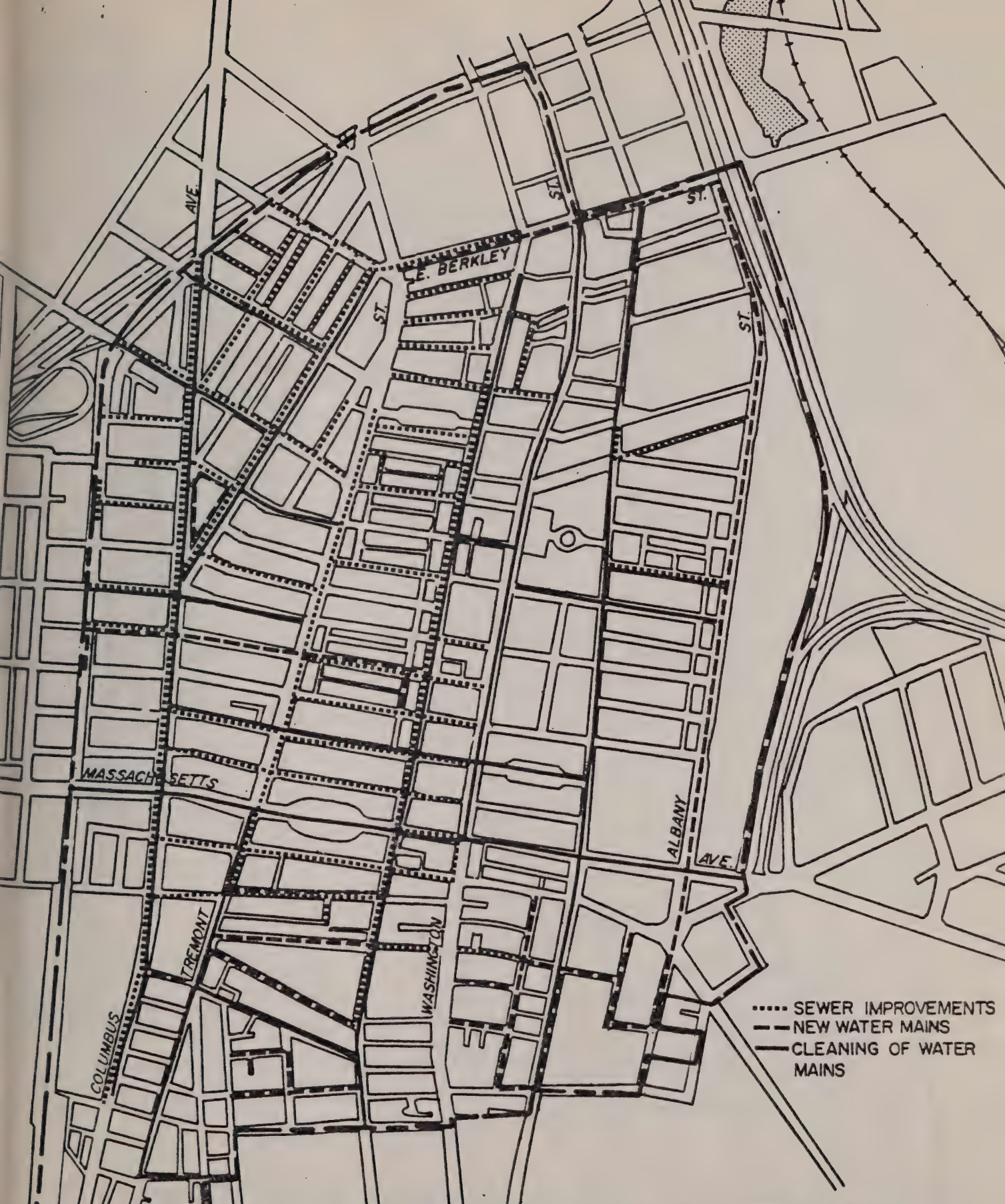
PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

Virtually every section of the South End has received private investment since the beginning of the Urban Renewal Plan in 1968. This investment has included the industrial investment of the Flower Market Complex along Albany Street, the institutional investment of the Boston University Medical Center between Albany and Harrison Avenue, and the commercial investment of Blanchard's Liquors and the Arco Gas Station along Northampton Street just south of the City Hospital capital improvements.

Although the commercial, institutional, and industrial investments are substantial housing investments have been the most substantial aspect of private activity in the South End.

A review of building permits indicates substantial residential rehabilitation. The more visible areas that give a sense of the impact of the investment from the private sector is indicated by the residential rehabilitation of Rutland Square, Warren Avenue, Dartmouth Place, Lawrence Street, Chandler Street, and other scattered sites throughout the South End.





- ..... SEWER IMPROVEMENTS
- - - NEW WATER MAINS
- CLEANING OF WATER MAINS

# PAST PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

## SOUTH END

0 200 400 600 800 FEET





PAST PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

SOUTH END

0 400 800 1000 FEET





AVE.

E. BERKLEY

ST.

ST.

ST.

MASSACHUSETTS

ALBANY

AVE.

TREMONT

WASHINGTON

COLUMBUS

RENOVATED NEW

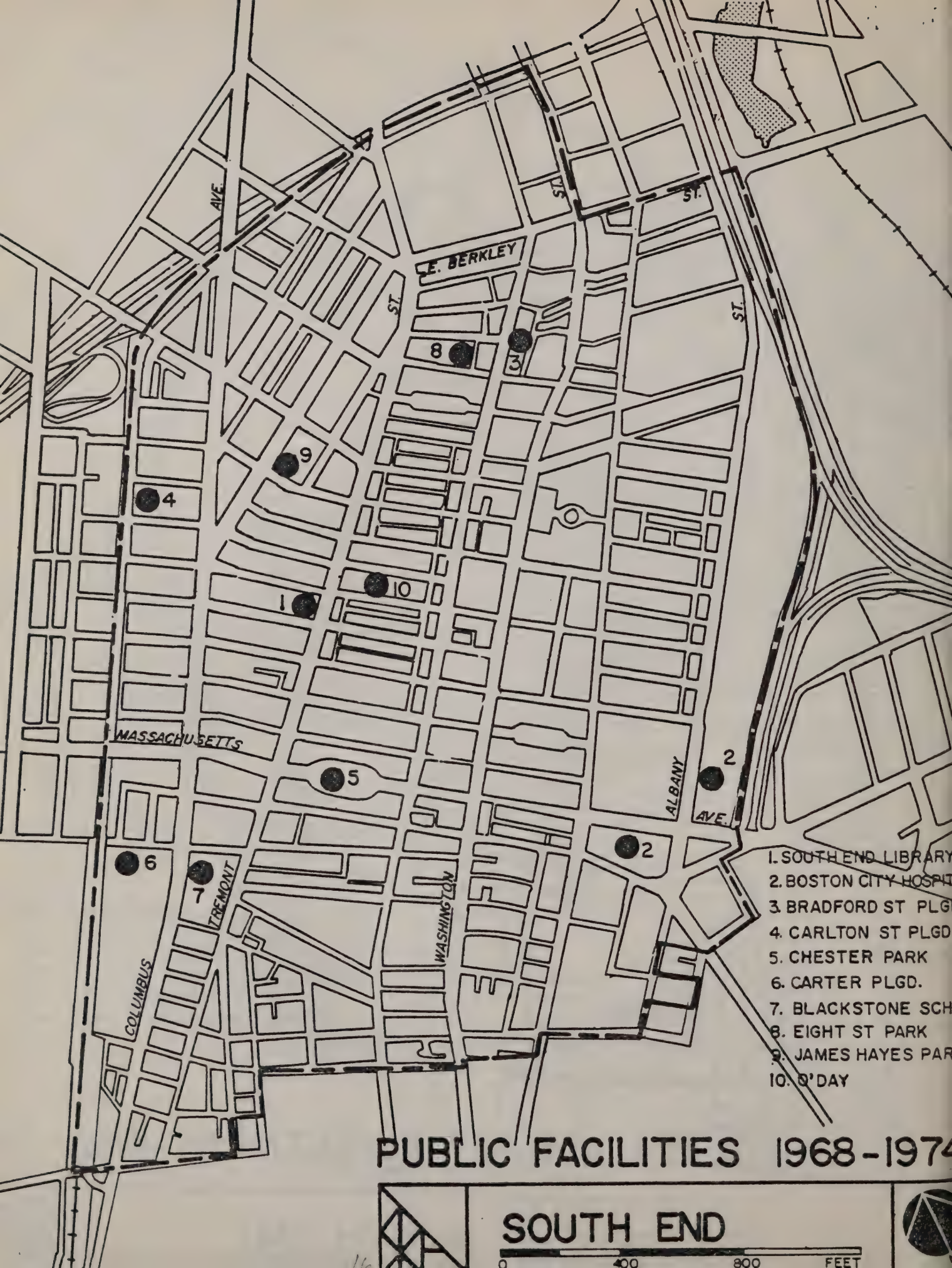
RESIDENTIAL  
INDUSTRIAL  
INSTITUTIONAL  
COMMERCIAL

□    ■  
○    ●  
○    ●  
△    ▲

PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1968- 74  
IN EXCESS OF \$10,000

SOUTH END





- 1. SOUTH END LIBRARY
- 2. BOSTON CITY HOSPITAL
- 3. BRADFORD ST PLG
- 4. CARLTON ST PLGD
- 5. CHESTER PARK
- 6. CARTER PLGD.
- 7. BLACKSTONE SCH
- 8. EIGHT ST PARK
- 9. JAMES HAYES PAR
- 10. O'DAY

PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-1974

SOUTH END

0 400 800 FEET

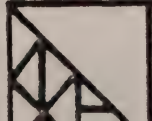




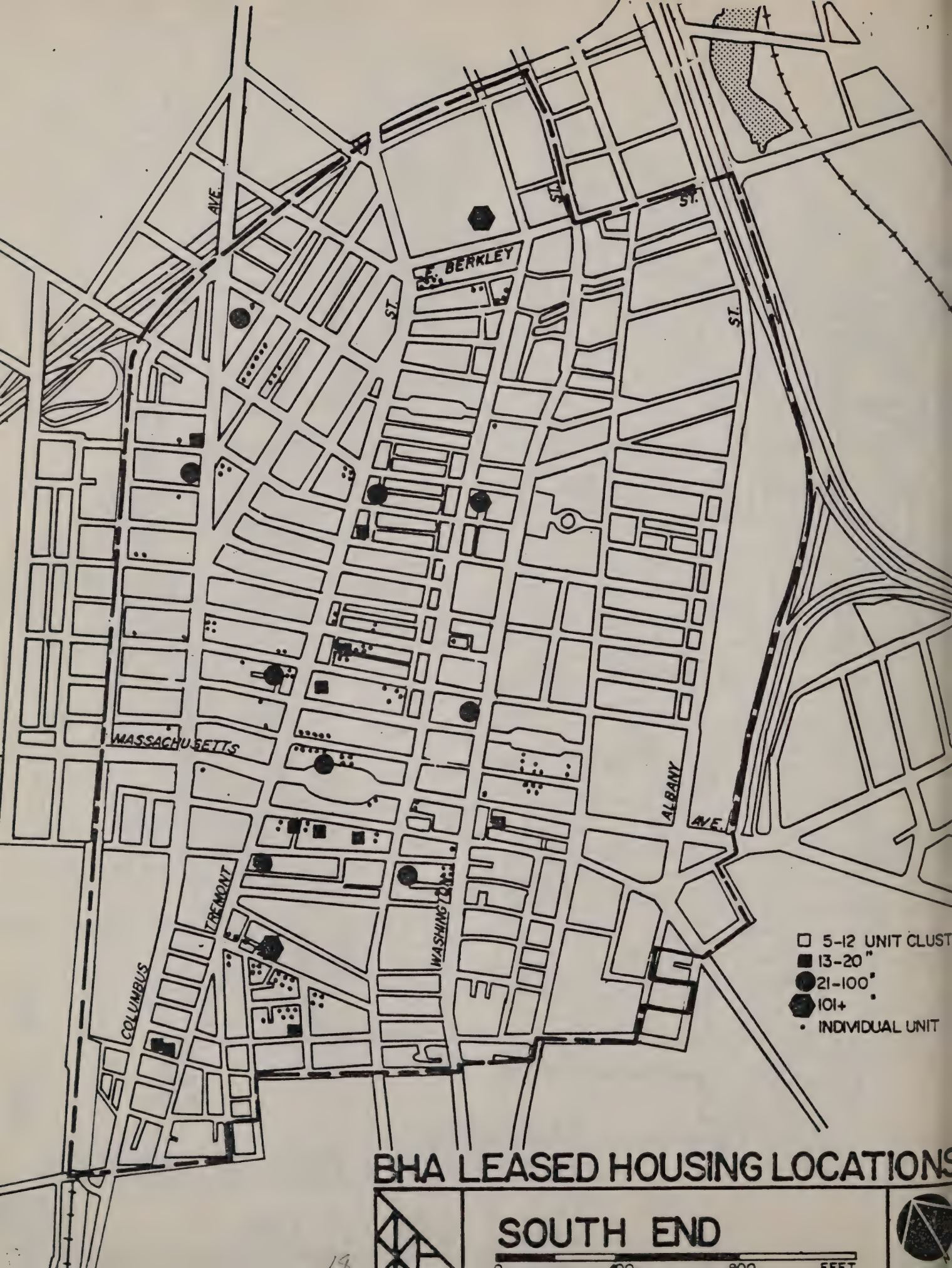
**SUBSIDIZED  
MULTIFAMILY RENTAL HOUSING**

**SOUTH END**

UNITS	NEW	REHAB
FHA		
1-12	○	●
13-40	○	●
41-100	○	●
101+	○	●
MFHA		
1-12		■
13-40		■
41-100		■
101+		■







- 5-12 UNIT CLUST
- 13-20 "
- 21-100 "
- 101+
- INDIVIDUAL UNIT

BHA LEASED HOUSING LOCATIONS

SOUTH END

0 200 400 600 800 FEET



#### D. ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

During the past decade, a unique relationship between the South End and the City and the BRA has produced a major revitalization effort directed toward improving the quality of life in the community, including new parks, 4,500 units of new and rehabilitated low and moderate income family and elderly housing, new commercial, institutional and industrial developments, and extensive street and utility work. As one of the largest urban renewal areas in the Country, the South End has received more than \$90 million in local, state and federal aid. The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, however, phases out, over a three year period, programs like urban renewal and rehabilitation loan and grant programs. Under the new Act, Boston instead will receive a substantially reduced, single "block grant" to be used for housing and community development, to be allocated according to neighborhood needs established throughout the entire City. As the transition from renewal to block grant funding moves forward, the South End's unique relationship to the City and the BRA should be modified.

As the result of financial cut-backs, the BRA is proposing a reduction in scope of the Renewal Plan in order to bring the project to substantial completion by 1977. The remaining activities are expected to cost more than \$60 million (see Appendix A), an amount twice as large as the total annual block grant available for city-wide distribution. It is, therefore, essential to determine the highest priorities and to use the limited funds in those areas where they will produce the greatest benefits. This complex process involves a thoughtful review of all prior and pending commitments, and the ultimate selection of activities that can be undertaken within the restrictions of reduced allocations. The Authority intends to focus its limited remaining resources on these essential priorities of common concern to all South End residents.

The substantial completion of the Renewal Plan and the continuation of the revitalization effort begun in the 1960's should be the primary goals of all interested South End residents. The successful achievement of these objectives depends, now more than ever, on a wide range of coordinated public and private actions in the areas of housing, public improvements, transportation, and commercial and industrial revitalization.



## 1. HOUSING REHABILITATION

### Issues

The preservation and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock is the most essential component of the continued neighborhood revitalization process - 40 percent (or 1,100 structures) of the existing South End townhouse stock is substandard, within varying degrees. In order to achieve this objective, however, a considerable number of lower income households may continue to be displaced by both public and private action, unless certain policies are adopted to protect their interests. Moreover, there is some evidence of class and racial discrimination among mortgage lenders in certain sections of the community, which threatens the viability of these areas and allows the downward spiral of deterioration and disinvestment to continue.

### Strategies

First, the community should recognize its responsibility to provide adequate housing for all those residents now living in the South End by making every effort to preserve the economically, socially, and racially integrated population. To this end, the 1,100 structures remaining to be rehabilitated should be used to encourage a combination of income mix and homeownership, with the ratio between low, moderate and market rents fluctuating according to available subsidies and planning goals of the time.

Second, a program should be established to encourage banks to loan in the South End irrespective of location, race, or class. A special loan fund, created with the cooperation of local lending and philanthropic institutions, can help elderly or lower income owners in otherwise sound areas to achieve code compliance, and the loan would be recovered in the course of normal ownership transfer.

In order to continue the revitalization process, the Housing Improvement Program should earmark approximately \$200,000 for the rehabilitation of approximately 150 structures in the South End for 1976, and additional Section 312 funds should be sought to further rehabilitation efforts. MHMFA and MHFA should also be encouraged to allocate rehabilitation funds wherever feasible.

In addition, the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the City should continue to strongly support an expanded direct housing allowance program. Because Boston is receiving a limited amount of Section 8 funds for this purpose, preference at this time is being given to those tenants in multi-family subsidized developments threatened with foreclosure and conversion to market rentals. Boston will strongly press for additional Section 8 subsidies, in order to meet the extensive needs of the low and moderate income population throughout the city. Finally, a substantial investment should be made by the Boston Housing Authority for modernization of the existing public housing projects in the South End.

2. MAINTAINING THE PRESENT RESOURCE OF NEWLY CONSTRUCTED AND REHABILITATED SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

Issue

Several of the new and rehabilitated multi-family subsidized housing developments in the South End face serious programatic, economic and social difficulties. If these complex problems are not dealt with promptly and directly, many low and moderate income units may be irrevocably lost through foreclosure and subsequent conversion to market rentals.

Strategy

The City is firmly committed to protecting the rights and interests of the existing residents in these financially troubled projects, and is proposing a selective program, using Section 8 funds in conjunction with rent control, code enforcement, and tax policy, in order to promote responsible ownership, responsive management and proper maintenance. Where appropriate, legal action should be used as the ultimate recourse to assure that subsidized housing continues to serve low and moderate income residents.

3. TRANSPORTATION

Issues

The South End has one of the lowest car-ownership rates in the city with 74 percent of its households having no cars available. Of its workers, 67 percent use public transportation or walk to work and only 29 percent drive, well below the city average of 43 percent. Nevertheless, due to its vulnerable gateway location adjacent to the downtown and the Back Bay/Fenway areas, the South End serves as a "doormat" to many people driving cars through its streets, both in crosstown and radial directions on the way to jobs, businesses, and shopping or recreation. This traffic tends to erode the livability of the South End with noise, air pollution, congestion and safety



hazards, and is therefore the most pressing transportation issue. Others involve the maintenance and improvement of public transportation, reasonable parking arrangements for resident cars, as well as the possible establishment of bicycle paths, control of truck routings and street maintenance.

### Strategy

Specific strategies for dealing with transportation issues are outlined in the September 6, 1974 "Statement on South End Transportation Issues," which represents a consensus between BRA and the South End Committee on Transportation. Summarized, the major strategies include:

1. Roadway improvements within the South End should not be aimed at increasing capacity for, or volumes of vehicles passing through the area. The current redesigning of Tremont Street and Columbus Avenue is proceeding in this vein, with design objectives of the two roadways designed to meet current volumes of traffic. This design requires careful attention to all cross town streets to assure that traffic will not take alternative routes through the residential streets.
2. Emphasis should be placed on roadway improvements on the periphery of the South End so that through-traffic can better pass around, not across the community. Strategies in this area include a twinpike frontage road system from Dorchester Avenue and the Southeast Expressway to Dartmouth Street, a new city arterial street in the Southwest Corridor, and improvements to Albany Street, parallel to the Southeast Expressway. These improvements are expected to take some of the pressure off Tremont Street and Columbus Avenue.
3. Where internal traffic routes exist, it is beneficial to clarify the relative role of various streets, whether they are, or should be, local, collector or arterial in nature. In this case, experimental circulation changes have been proposed for West Newton Street, West Concord Street, West Dedham Street, and Shawmut Avenue in conjunction with the Tremont/Columbus redesigning, as well as various other street closings and direction changes to ameliorate traffic patterns at intersections. Other issues in this area involve the role of East Berkeley Street and improvements on Northampton Street.
4. Public transportation must be maintained and improved in the future. The Washington Street El is the transit



spine of the South End and should not be eliminated until at least equivalent service is assured within a reasonable time frame. Two alternatives for South End replacement service when the Orange Line is relocated are a Green Line branch running down Washington Street to Dudley as a surface streetcar, and bus service on exclusive lanes on Washington Street. These ideas need further discussion with the community in the context of Southwest Corridor planning.

5. Street improvements should be directed to improving the pedestrian environment. This strategy is being pursued through an overall street lighting and repaving contract and specific design improvements on Tremont and Columbus, where sidewalks will be widened and provided with pedestrian amenities.
6. Parking policies should exclude spill-over parking from adjacent areas. This strategy can best be pursued through downtown parking policy and good enforcement of on-street parking regulations within the South End. The discouraging of through-traffic will also contribute to alleviation of commuter parking problems.

#### 4. COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION

##### • Issues

Although most of the neighborhoods in the South End are liveable and attractive, many of the commercial areas have high vacancies and are deteriorated and unprofitable. In the northerly section, many suffer as the result of competition from adjacent shopping districts around the Prudential Center, Copley Square and the Central Business District. In the southerly section of the community, lack of purchasing power in the surrounding neighborhoods has been responsible for commercial stagnation and decline.

Tremont Street (between Herald and West Newton Streets), Tremont Street (around Mass. Ave.) and Washington Street (around Mass. Ave.) are the three major shopping areas, along with scattered commercial activity along Columbus Avenue. The first is the most stable, with 6 percent of the stores vacant, while the latter suffer from a 20 to 37 percent vacancy rate. Boarded stores along Washington Street area source of blight and a highly visible sign of community decline. In the northerly section, many residents and homeowners feel that ground floor commercial activity is inappropriate and incompatible with the residential character of their neighborhood.

##### Strategies

Because many of the marginal commercial facilities in the South End border on Tremont and Columbus, and the improvement plan outlined above calls for wider sidewalks, tree planting and the installaton

of lighting and sidewalk furniture, these physical improvements are expected to make these shopping areas more attractive.

In addition, the City should assist local merchants and businessmen's associations by setting up workshops and providing technical assistance on such matters as merchandizing and storefront rehabilitation. Since a more diverse mix of stores is desired in the South End, public policy should be used to strengthen the existing market so that more merchants will be attracted to the neighborhood.

## 5. INDUSTRIAL REVITALIZATION

### Issue

The primary planning and design concept for the South End was developed from the fact that there are two major communities in the project area - a predominantly residential community and an industrial and medical institutional community. The latter, located between Harrison Avenue and the Southeast Expressway, has over the past decade accommodated much of the expansion needs of Boston City Hospital and Boston University Medical Center.

However, the results of the migration of industrial plants from the city to modern one floor facilities in the suburbs and rural areas have posed nearly insoluble problems for central cities. The unemployment rate is steadily declining, city population has been dwindling, taxable incomes are decreasing, and there is a multitude of vacant old buildings. The underutilized old structures interspersed with tracts of vacant land cause blight and result in building deterioration, non-taxable land, and a variety of health and safety hazards.

### Strategy

The BRA should make a concerted effort as part of its close-out strategy to formulate specific policies, plans, procedures and feasibility studies for recruiting and retaining light industrial and commercial uses within this area for the purposes of (1) maintaining and increasing the city's tax base; (2) retaining and boosting employment opportunities for its residents; (3) improving the general environment of this area of the South End; (4) increasing the city's industrial base of small and medium-sized firms; (5) providing initial space for new minority-owned businesses; (6) sustaining certain marginal businesses because of their services; and (7) attracting new businesses to the central city. In addition, consideration should be given to relocating the District Four Police Station to Parcel 31, bounded by Washington, East Berkeley and Harrison Avenue.



## 6. PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

### Issue

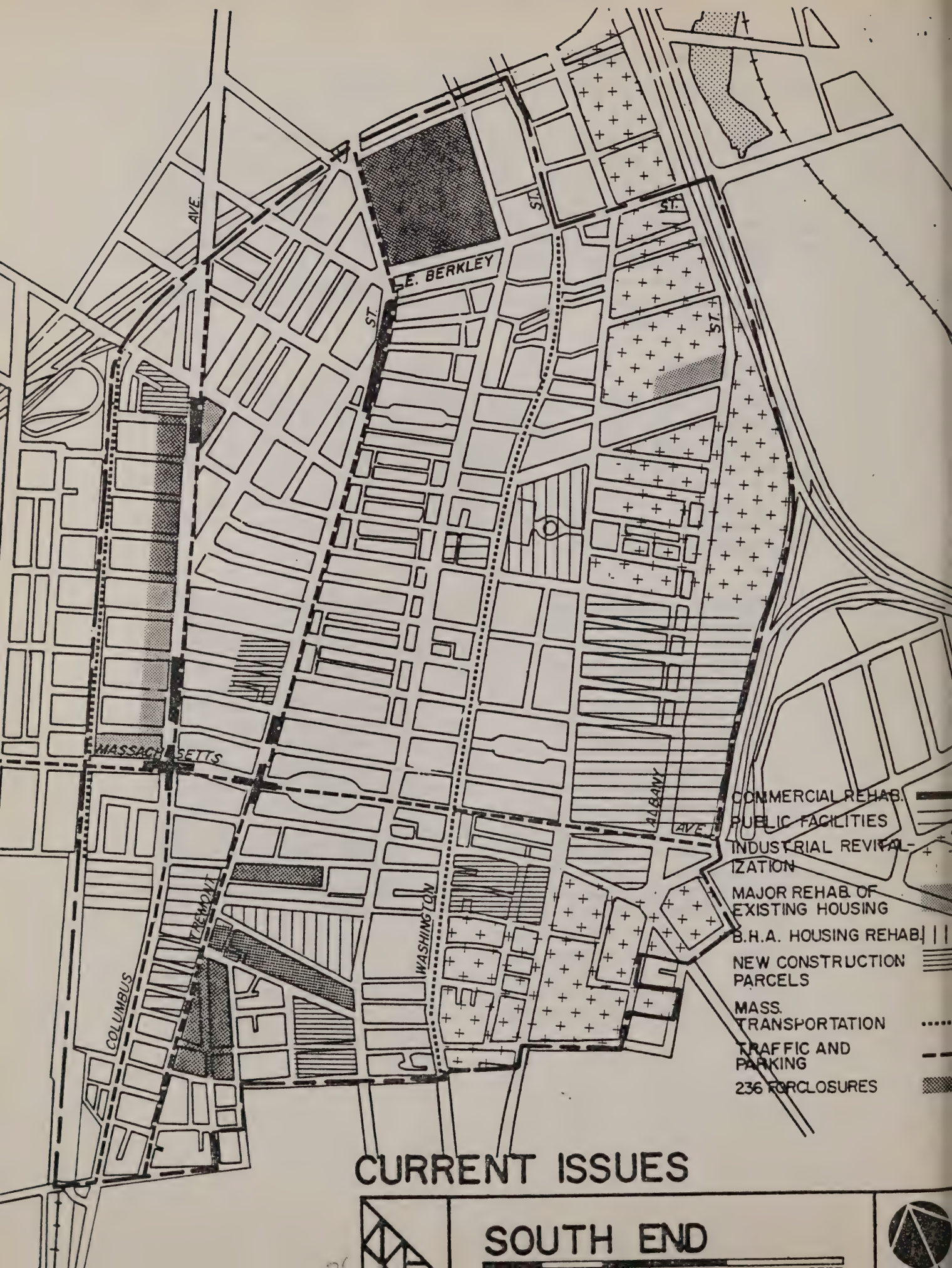
One of the most ambitious planning and design objectives in the Renewal plan called for the improvement of streets, street lighting, utilities and the provision of parks and playgrounds. To date, street lighting and public open spaces are complete, relining and replacing the water system is approximately 95 percent complete, sewer and drain work is about 60 percent complete, and street reconstruction is 10 to 15 percent complete. The funding cut-backs will make it extremely difficult to complete many of the public improvements originally scheduled under the Plan.

### Strategy

One of the most important priorities under the new block grant program will be to determine what specific public improvements can be completed within the available budget prior to the closing out of renewal activities in 1977. After that time, all remaining public improvements in the South End will become a component of Boston's Capital Improvement Program, and financed and scheduled within the context of overall city-wide needs and priorities.

Finally, to the extent that existing commitments under the Renewal Plan can be met under current funding levels, the Boston Redevelopment Authority intends to support and participate in those programs and policies geared to meet the above objectives. More importantly, the ultimate achievement of these goals depends in large measure on increased cooperation between public agencies, the private sector and broad community support, in order to ensure that this revitalization process will continue after the completion of the Urban Renewal Plan. Hopefully, the issues and strategies outlined above can serve as constructive policy guidelines for ongoing public and private decisions and activities within the community in the years ahead. For this reason, these recommendations are both pragmatic in their reflection of current funding levels and existing programs, as well as flexible enough to accommodate, over time, changing circumstances and demands.





CURRENT ISSUES

SOUTH END

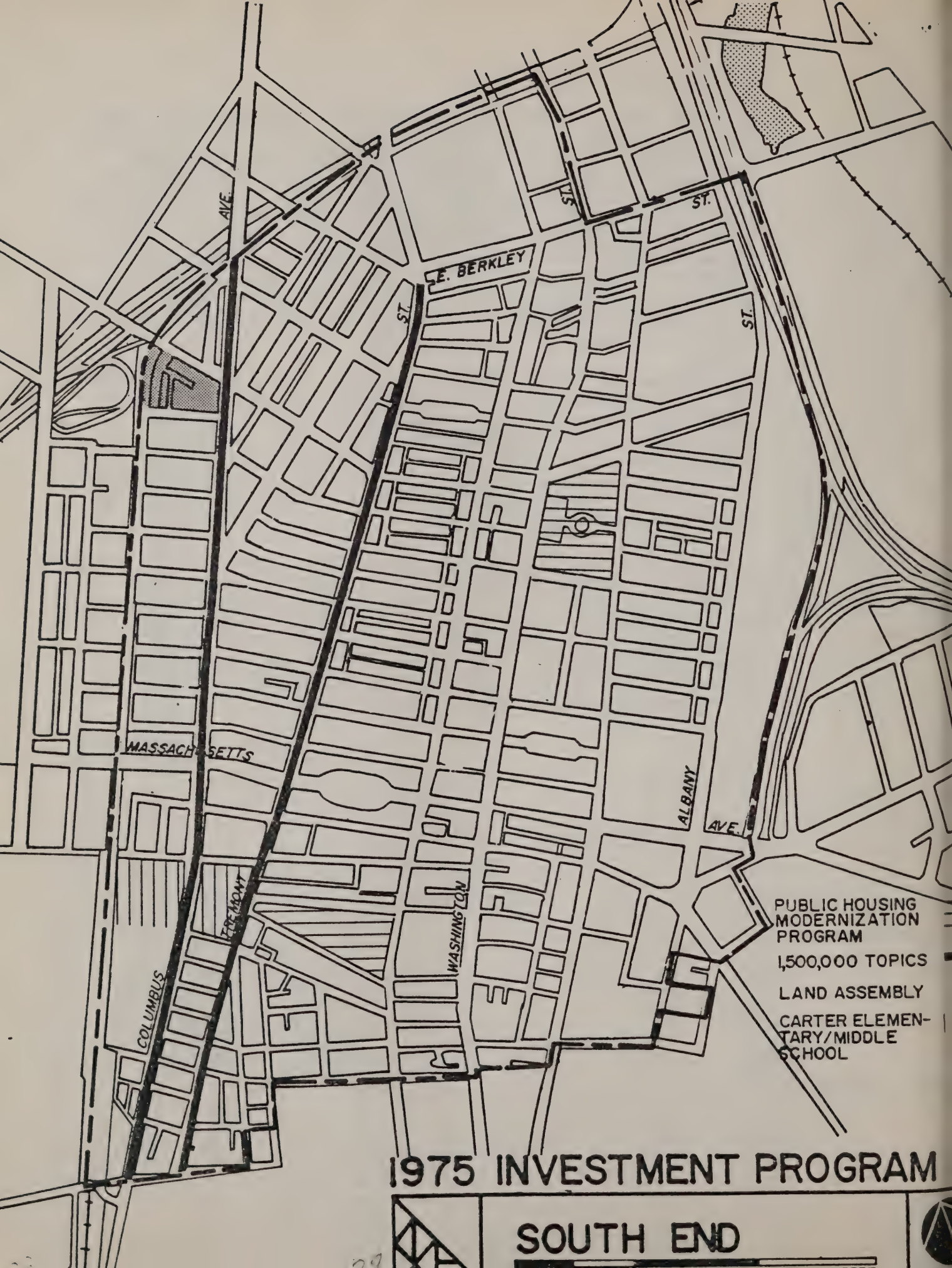
#### E. 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1975 Program in the South End includes a wide range of investments using city, state and federal resources. First, one component of the program for housing is the Housing Improvement Program, which provides financial incentives and technical assistance for the rehabilitation of owner-occupied residential structures with 1 to 6 dwelling units. The main City Hall will serve as a site office for the administration of this program, with \$100,00 reserved for the rehabilitation of approximately 65 structures. In addition \$2,423,400 in Section 312 loans have been assigned for previously approved applicants. Finally, \$86,000 of modernization funds have been committed for the Cathedral Public Housing Project on Harrison Avenue.

Second, the BRA is continuing to undertake many of the major remaining activities in the Renewal Project, for an expenditure of \$13,428,202. These will include both the activities which are approved as Federal expenditures and those which the Federal Government has accepted as part of the City's Matching Share of the urban renewal program. These activities range in scope from completion of site assembly on several remaining development parcels to major street construction work.

Finally, in the areas of Capital Improvements, the City will continue a program of investment in neighborhood capital improvements, funded primarily as a local share for the urban renewal program. New Public Facilities include the Blackstone Square Elementary School which is presently under construction, and the Carter Elementary/Middle School, now in judicial review. In addition, major public works improvements include \$1,500,000 in TOPICS funds for the redesign of Columbus Avenue and Tremont Street.





PUBLIC HOUSING  
MODERNIZATION  
PROGRAM  
1,500,000 TOPICS  
LAND ASSEMBLY  
CARTER ELEMEN-  
TARY/MIDDLE  
SCHOOL

1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

SOUTH END



F. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

As urban renewal and rehabilitation loan and grant programs are phased out over the next three years, it is essential that South End residents participate in a priority process that will result in the substantial completion of the Renewal Plan by 1977, as well as make recommendations to ensure that the revitalization effort will continue beyond this date. Because the available funds are limited, the decisions will be difficult. Within this context, the following general investment needs are outlined for review and consideration.

Future investment needs for housing in the South End include continuation of the Housing Improvement Program to provide for the rehabilitation of approximately 150 dwelling units per year, and expansion of the program to provide deeper rehabilitation subsidy for lower income homeowners. Additional Section 312 money should be sought from HUD, MHFA and MHMFA should be encouraged to participate in the rehabilitation effort, and the public housing projects require substantial upgrading. Finally, disposition parcel assembly for the remaining housing developments presently in the pipeline should be completed by the BRA.

In the area of transportation, emphasis should be placed on roadway improvements, on the periphery of the Community, the maintenance and improvement of public transportation, and street and sidewalk reconstruction.

Investment needs related to commercial and industrial revitalization include provision by the City of technical assistance on such matters as merchandizing and storefront rehabilitation. In addition, the BRA should make a concerted effort as part of its closeout strategy to formulate specific policies, procedures and feasibility studies for recruiting and retaining light industrial and commercial uses within the industrial section of the district.

Finally, priorities for remaining public improvements must be established to insure the completion of as much of this work as possible before 1977.

# 6. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Urban Renewal Close-out (Federally Funded Acti-	Meet objectives set forth in Neighborhood Improvement Pro.	\$13,428,202	Establish priorities through 1977
Housing	Preservation of housing stock MHIP	HIP - \$100,000	HIP - minimum 150 units per year
	312 Loans	\$2,423,400	As available
	Technical rehab assistance	HIP & BRA staff service	HIP & BRA staff services
	Deep rehabilitation subsidy		Funds for deeper subsidy (direct housing allowance)
	Public housing modernization	\$86,000	Bring housing up to code; regular maintenance; improved security measures
	Code Enforcement		Provide staff support for code enforcement
	Stabilization of neighborhood mortgage assistance		
	Neighborhood organizations		

G. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Transportation	Columbus/Tremont Roadway Improvements experimental circulation changes  Improve 7 maintain public Transportation	\$1,500,000 (TOPICS)	Funding of proposed improve- ments (Urban Systems)
Commercial Revitalization	Strengthen business organizations to direct revitalization  Improve attractive- ness of major com- mercial areas Encourage new com- mercial development	Land assembly (Parcel 11B)	Commercial Revitalization Program  Street & sidewalk improve- ments, lights, trees, street furniture Storefront rehab incentive
Industrial Revitalization	Encourage recruit- ment & retention of light industry and/or commercial  Relocation of Dist. 4 Police Sta. to in- dustrial area		Site acquisition (funding as available)  Capital Improvements Program
Public Improvements	Improvement of sts. & sidewalks in resi- dential areas  Water, sewer, drain systems reconstruc- tion  Construction of new Public Facilities	\$3,500,000  \$7,410,000  Carter Elementary/Middle School (in judicial review) (\$13,706,500)	Street & sidewalk improve- ments  Utility improvements  Need for a new Williams School



## APPENDIX A

### SURVEY OF PROJECTED EXPENSES FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE SOUTH END PROJECT

A.	Acquisition	-	\$ 9.04 million
	Relocation	-	2.79 million
	Demolition	-	0.38 million
<hr/> Total			<hr/> \$12.11 million

### SURVEY OF PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE SOUTH END PROJECT

B.	Street Reconstruction	-	\$24.3 million
	Parks	-	3.8 million
	Engineering and Overhead	-	5.7 million
<hr/> Total			<hr/> \$33.8 million
C.	Water	-	\$ 0.5 million
	Sewer and Drain	-	15.1 million
	Engineering		3.0 million
<hr/> Total			<hr/> \$18.6 million
Total of A, B, and C		=	\$64.51 million

M3/B16  
RA  
75/7

pt. 17

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS  
DEPARTMENT  
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

WORKING DRAFT  
FOR  
COMMUNITY REVIEW

WEST ROXBURY

Background Information, Planning Issues and  
Neighborhood Improvement Strategies

City of Boston  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
District Planning Program

June 1975





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3

- A. Short History
- B. Existing Characteristics
- C. Past Public Investment
- D. Past Private Investment

#### II. PLANNING ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

15

- A. Commercial Area Decline
- B. Negative Impact of Gardiner Street Dump
- C. Reuse of the West Roxbury Quarry
- D. Residential Area Improvements
- E. Public Transportation Improvements
- F. Upgrading of Private Ways to Public Streets
- G. Scarcity of Social Services

#### III. 1975 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM

23

- A. Housing
- B. Commercial Area Revitalization
- C. Capital Improvements
- D. Neighborhood Health Services

#### IV. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

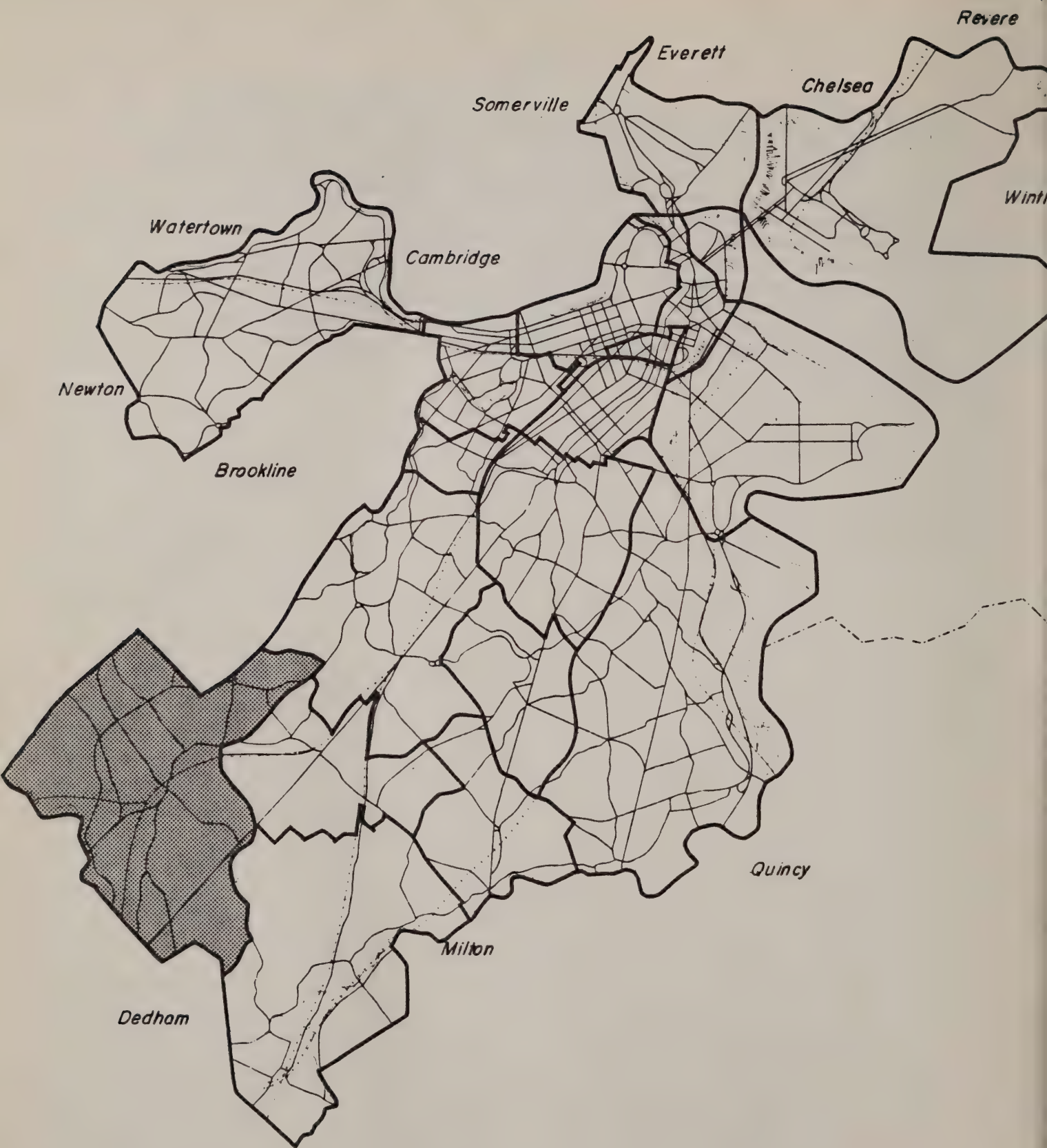
24



## INTRODUCTION

This planning report, prepared by the West Roxbury District Planner, is intended to assist local residents and City Officials who are defining the needs of the West Roxbury District. The report is divided into four major sections. The first section covers the background of the District including a short history, recent census data, and private and public construction activity during the past five years. The second part highlights a number of current physical planning and housing issues, which concern residents in West Roxbury. Preliminary strategies which address these issues are also suggested in this section. The third part of the report summarizes the 1975 public investment program for West Roxbury; and finally the fourth section outlines public projects and activities which should be undertaken by the City or other governmental organizations.





WEST ROXBURY



## I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### A. SHORT HISTORY

The area known today as West Roxbury was in its early years part of the Town of Roxbury, founded in 1630. At that time the district was wooded and rocky, with marshes along the Charles River. The flatlands were devoted primarily to farming. By the early 1800's, the rudiments of West Roxbury Village had formed along Centre Street near Spring Street.

Two famous institutions were located here. Roxbury Latin School, the oldest private grammar school in America, was founded in 1645. The school operates today at the same site near Centre and Spring Streets. In 1841, one of the farms in West Roxbury became the site of a famous utopian experiment: the Brook Farm community. A group of Transcendentalists established, in the words of Nathaniel Hawthorne, "a beautiful scheme of a noble and unselfish life," where everyone was expected to take part in farm activities as well as intellectual pursuits. In 1847, the group dissolved due to financial loss when the new dormitory was destroyed by fire. Most of the key buildings remain at the site near Sawmill Brook, but are in fair to poor condition.

As a result of a conflict between the rural and the more developed parts of Roxbury, West Roxbury split off from Roxbury in 1851. The rural Town of West Roxbury included areas known today as Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, and West Roxbury.

In 1851, the Dedham Branch of the railroad opened, bringing West Roxbury within easy commuting distance to Boston. Three stations served the area encompassed in the present day planning district and small-scale entrepreneurs began building homes for the commuting middle classes in the vicinity of the rail line. The first wave of construction after the Civil War formed initial patterns of development. In 1874, West Roxbury was annexed to the City of Boston. During a second wave of home building from the mid-1880's to the 1890's, streets were laid out in about half the district.

By 1920, less than one fourth of the residential units now existing had been built. A building boom in the decade of the 1920's increased the housing stock to nearly half that of the present day. The Parkway and Mt. Vernon areas were nearly three-fourths developed, and Bellevue Hill was over half-developed. Construction continuing during the Depression at about half the 1920's rate filled in much of the remaining land in these neighborhoods. Most of the relatively few homes of the 1940's were built in the Brook Farm - Sawmill area, bringing the number of homes in this area to about three-fourths the present day number, the remaining lots being developed for the most part during the 1950's. Nearly all post-War residential construction in the district, however, was concentrated in the southernmost section of the district, the Upper Washington - Spring Streets area. About half the units now existing there were built during the 1950's and 1960's.



## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Population in West Roxbury increased by 24% between 1960 and 1970 to 35,410. Most of this growth occurred in the newer sections, south of the Needham Branch Railroad, where one-family and apartment house construction took place.

The condition of housing is, for the most part, excellent with some structures in fair condition (in need of minor repairs) scattered throughout the district. In the few instances where these structures in need of repair are grouped together, they are located on or near major streets such as Washington and Spring-Centre Streets. There are almost no structures noted in poor condition (i.e., buildings in need of major repair) with the few observed located, in most instances, in the Washington/Grove Streets area.

1970's median family income for West Roxbury was the highest in the City, with the exception of the Back Bay-Beacon Hill area. This median figure of \$12,285 was \$3,152 above the City's median.

In 1970, West Roxbury had the highest percentage of persons over 65 of any community in Boston, although the lowest percentage of aged persons below the poverty level.

West Roxbury, unlike many areas of Boston, is suburban in character. Most of the planning district is devoted to well maintained single family homes. In addition to the well established and new single family residential areas, there are a number of apartment buildings located in the planning district. These new apartment complexes, which in the last several years have dominated construction in the area, range in size from small 16-18 unit buildings to large multi-structure developments (for example, Colonial Village and Georgetown). A concentration of these apartment buildings and developments occurs along Washington and Grove Streets. Other new complexes are found near the VFW Parkway, on Spring Street, and near LaGrange Street.

The residential character of the planning district and other factors such as poor access to the highway system has precluded large amounts of industrial development. The two areas of industrial use are the quarry on Grove Street and the City's land fill dump in the Sawmill area. Few additional industrial uses are considered likely because of the proximity of remaining developable land to residential areas.

The district's commercial areas are located along major streets and parkways and serve customers who come by car. The older main commercial area along Centre Street is congested for this reason, but has generally maintained its vitality, though some vacancies and deterioration exist at the fringes.



Two older smaller commercial nodes at Grove and Washington Streets and along Spring Street seem to be suffering from the competition of nearby shopping centers at VFW Parkway and in Roslindale. It is adjacent to these two older commercial areas that most of the district's small amount of residential deterioration occurs.

A large area of land along Sawmill Brook in the southwestern section of the district is wetland, serving as a flood plain for the Charles River. The wetlands have been encroached upon by the city dump and by the major institutional use in the district-the cemeteries. Here five cemeteries, Mt. Benedict, St. Joseph's, Mt. Lebanon, Gethsemane, and Holyhood, occupy some 535 acres, of which only 50% is developed. A 179 acre vacant portion of these cemeteries is expected to be purchased by the Metropolitan District Commission for passive recreation-if the appropriation bill passes the State House and Senate this year.

The following is a discussion of West Roxbury's sub-areas:

#### 1. BELLEVUE HILL/LAGRANGE

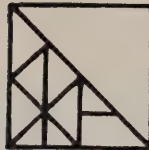
Located in the eastern portion of West Roxbury, Bellevue Hill is bounded by the West Roxbury Parkway, Washington Street, the West Roxbury Quarry and the Needham Branch Railroad. In 1970, Bellevue Hill had a population of 6210, an increase of 6% over 1960. Because this is an older section of the district, it experienced little growth in the last decade. The age characteristics for this area also reflect this older composition with a high proportion of elderly individuals (21%). Median family income for this area (\$13,220) exceeded the district-wide median of \$12,285 and only 7% of the families earned under \$5,000 annually.

Of the 1780 housing units recorded in 1970, only 85 (5%) required repairs in excess of \$1,000 each, according to a 1972 survey. Most of this need is in the area closest to the Centre Street commercial district. Over 85% of all structures in Bellevue Hill contain 1-2 family units and 96% are owner occupied.

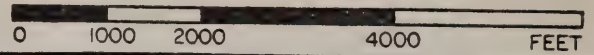
The Centre Street commercial area and the strip stores along Washington Street provide the major convenience goods and services to Bellevue Hill. Also a small shopping center with a supermarket and convenience goods stores is located on the northern edge of Bellevue Hill.

#### 2. BROOK FARM/PARKWAY

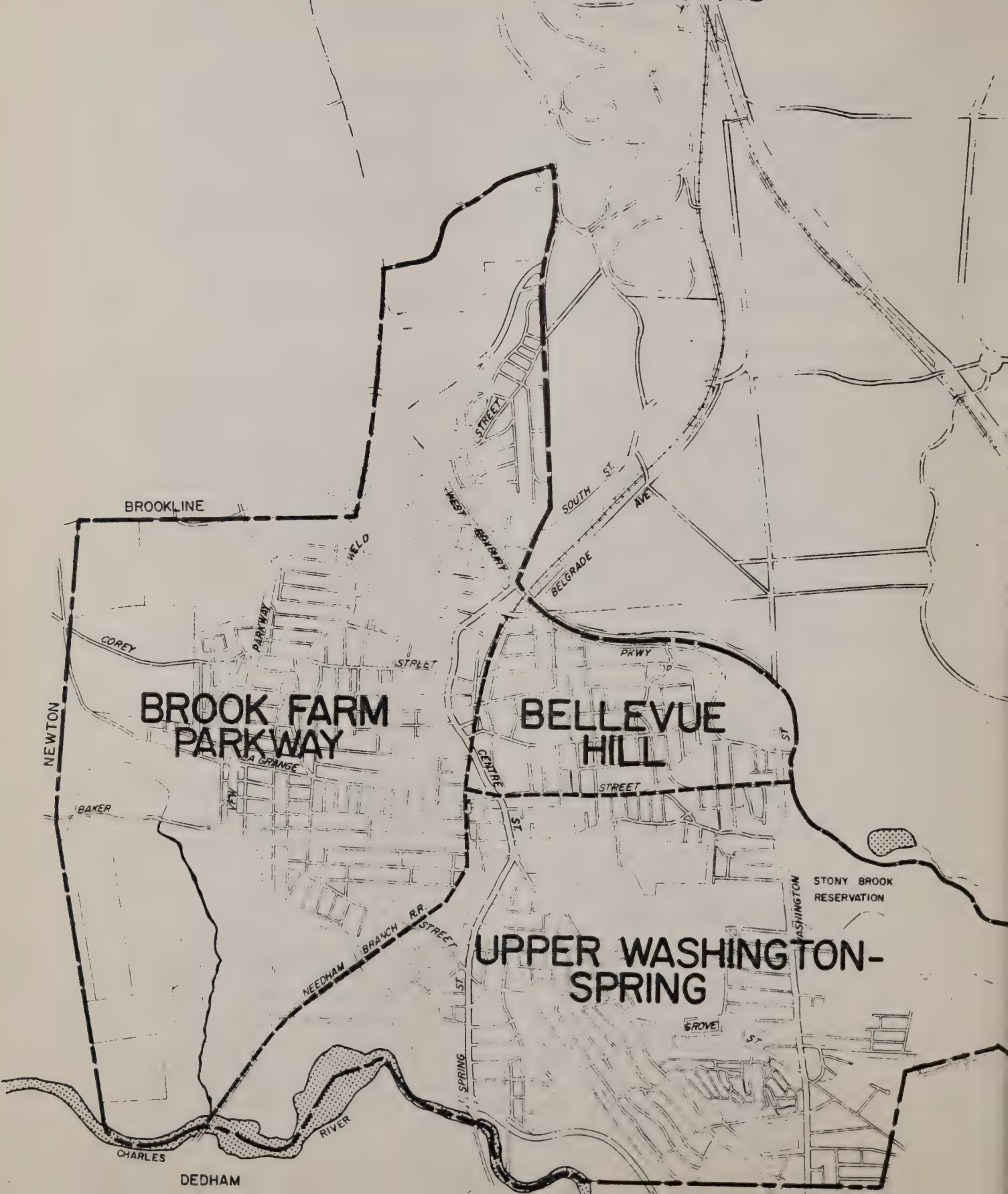
The Brook Farm/Parkway area is located to the west of the Needham Branch Railroad and is bounded on its other sides by Newton and Brookline. In 1970, its population was 16,600 representing an increase of only 3% over 1960. Very little new construction has occurred in this area. The existing population is older and living in single family homes. The median family income ranges from \$12,000 to \$13,010, slightly above the district wide median, and only 7% of the total families earn below \$5,000 annually.



# WEST ROXBURY



## SUB-AREAS





Of the 4,880 housing units recorded in 1970, 55 (less than 1%) required repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. 92% of the houses in the sub-area are owner occupied and 89% contain 1-2 family units.

Westbrook Village Shopping Center and the Centre Street commercial area are within the Brook Farm/Parkway area. Both commercial districts adequately serve the residents of this area.

### 3. UPPER WASHINGTON/SPRING STREETS

The Upper Washington/Spring Streets area is located in the southern portion of West Roxbury and is bounded by the Needham Branch Railroad, Newton, Dedham and Hyde Park. It is generally the most suburban of all of Boston's neighborhoods and contains some very attractive single-family areas. In 1970, its population was 12,600, an increase of 30% over 1960. Most of this growth was due to apartment construction in the Washington-Grove Streets neighborhood.

Of the 4,235 housing units counted in 1970, 105 (2%) required repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. Because of the high number of apartments, only 61% of the total units were in 1-2 family structures, although 94% of the structures were owner occupied. There is very little housing deterioration in this sub-area, although limited pockets are found in the Washington-Grove Streets neighborhood.

Because of the lack of neighborhood stores, the commercial area at Washington/Grove Streets serves the residents poorly, especially the apartment dwellers. The recently completed Star Market and Osco Drug better serve the Spring/Centre Streets area.



# Comparative Statistics - West Roxbury

## 1970 U.S. Census Data

<u>Population</u>	<u>Bellevue Hill/ LaGrange</u>	<u>Brook Farm/ Parkway</u>	<u>Upper Washington/ Spring</u>	<u>WEST ROXBURY DISTRICT</u>	<u>CITY</u>
Total 1970	6,210	16,600	12,600	35,410	639,803
Change from '60	+6%	+ 3%	+30%	+24%	-8%
Aged 15-19 yrs. 1970	579	1,059	890	2,761	60,900
Change from '60	+21%	+16%	+42%	+26%	+17%
Aged 20-24 yrs. 1970	449	789	1,064	2,496	76,958
Change from '60	+38%	+19%	+67%	+41%	+41%
Aged 65 yrs. & over 1970	986	2,553	1,656	5,616	81,437
Change from '60	+14%	+25%	+58%	+32%	-5%
<u>Income</u>					
Median Family	\$13,220	\$12,000- 13,010	\$11,440-	\$12,285	\$9,133
% Families under \$5,000	7%	7%	8%	8%	22%
<u>Housing</u>					
Total Dwelling Units	1,780	4,880	4,235	10,895	232,401
Units Needing Repairs in excess of \$1,000	85	55	105	245	67,102
% Owner Occupied Units	96%	92%	94%	94%	27%
Mobility of Residents: % People in same house over 5 years-1970	70%	70%	55%	64%	50%

### C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

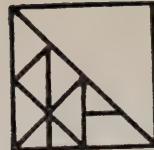
Since 1970 the major thrust of the City's Capital Improvement Program has been in strengthening neighborhoods through the construction or renovation of community facilities and parks, reconstruction of streets, and replacement of sewer and water lines. The City spent \$1.1 million for the construction of the Cannon Elementary School and \$7.4 million for the completion of the Ohrenberger School. Two playgrounds had additions: the Draper Playground Pool was constructed for \$700,000 and the Hynes Playground Pavillion was constructed for \$51,400. In 1972, the Police Substation was placed in a renovated gasoline service station at a cost of \$86,883. In 1974, an addition to the Washington Street Fire Station (Engine Company 55) was completed at a cost of \$385,000.

Three smaller scale capital expenditures by the Parks and Recreation Department include floodlights in Billings Field (\$37,000), Draper Field (\$58,000), and Hynes Field (\$23,200). In addition to floodlights, Billings and Draper fields received other improvements.

At the same time there were over 120 streets reconstructed or resurfaced, 27 sidewalks reconstructed and 11 streets that underwent sewer and water line improvements. In addition to new street lighting along West Boundary Road to serve the new Ohrenberger School, the Centre Street Business lighting program with sodium vapor bulbs, was completed in 1974 between West Roxbury Parkway and Spring Street at a cost of \$150,000.

Public effort in housing has been directed to three areas of activity: new development, leased housing, and rehabilitation. The Boston Housing Authority completed a 72 unit, elderly housing project along Rockland Street. In 1974, the Massachusetts Housing and Finance Agency financed the development of Rockingham Glen Housing Development for the elderly. This 141 unit development at Rockingham and Washington Streets was occupied in 1974 with 25% of the units leased to the Boston Housing Authority for low income, elderly individuals and families. Since September 1973, the Housing Improvement Program has encouraged the private rehabilitation of over 129 homes in the district. This program has been instrumental in the preservation of the housing stock by offering tax rebates to homeowners who complete home improvements to meet minimum code requirements.





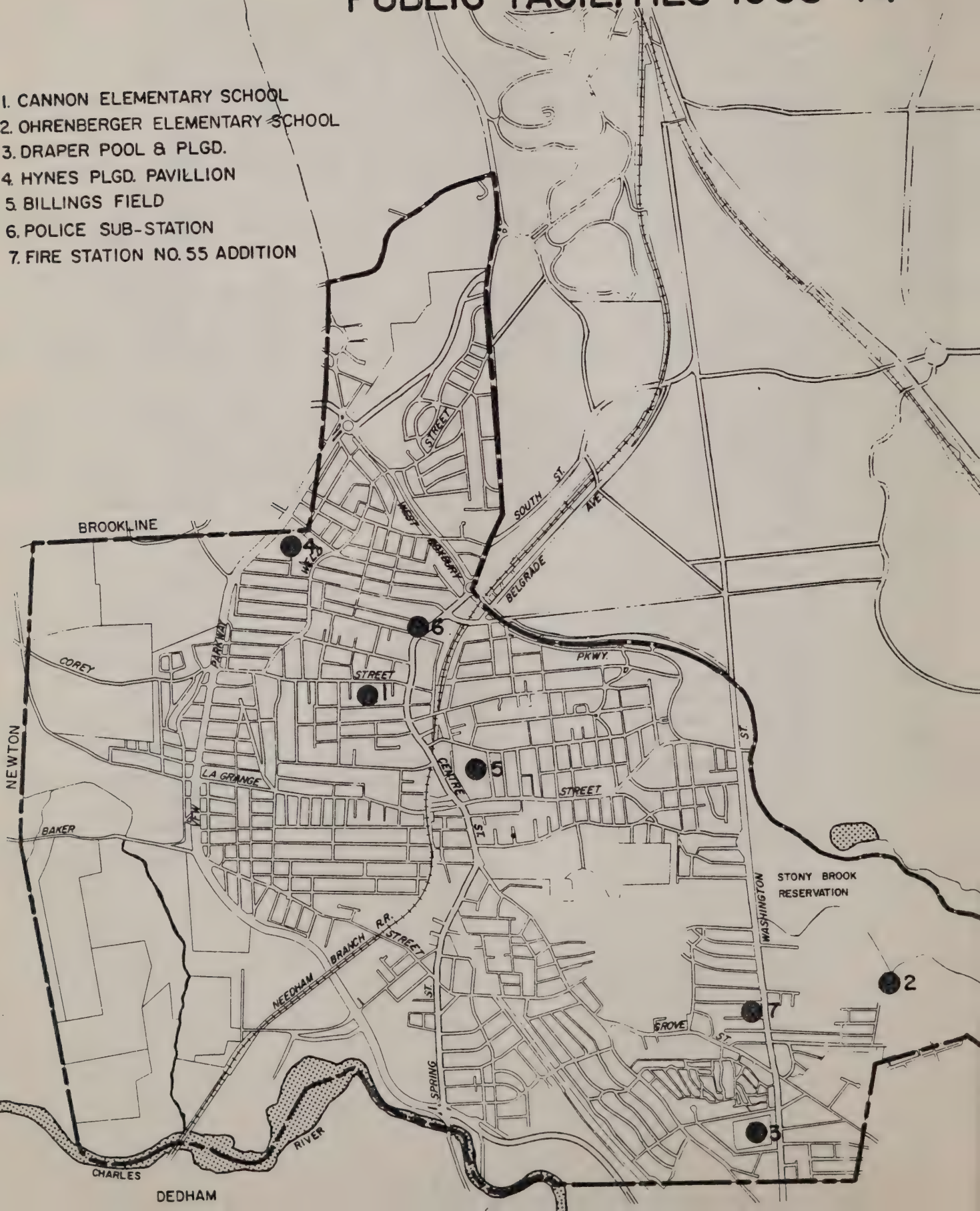
# WEST ROXBURY

0 1000 2000 4000 FEET

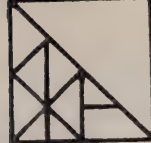


## PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-74

1. CANNON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
2. OHRENBERGER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
3. DRAPER POOL & PLGD.
4. HYNES PLGD. PAVILLION
5. BILLINGS FIELD
6. POLICE SUB-STATION
7. FIRE STATION NO. 55 ADDITION







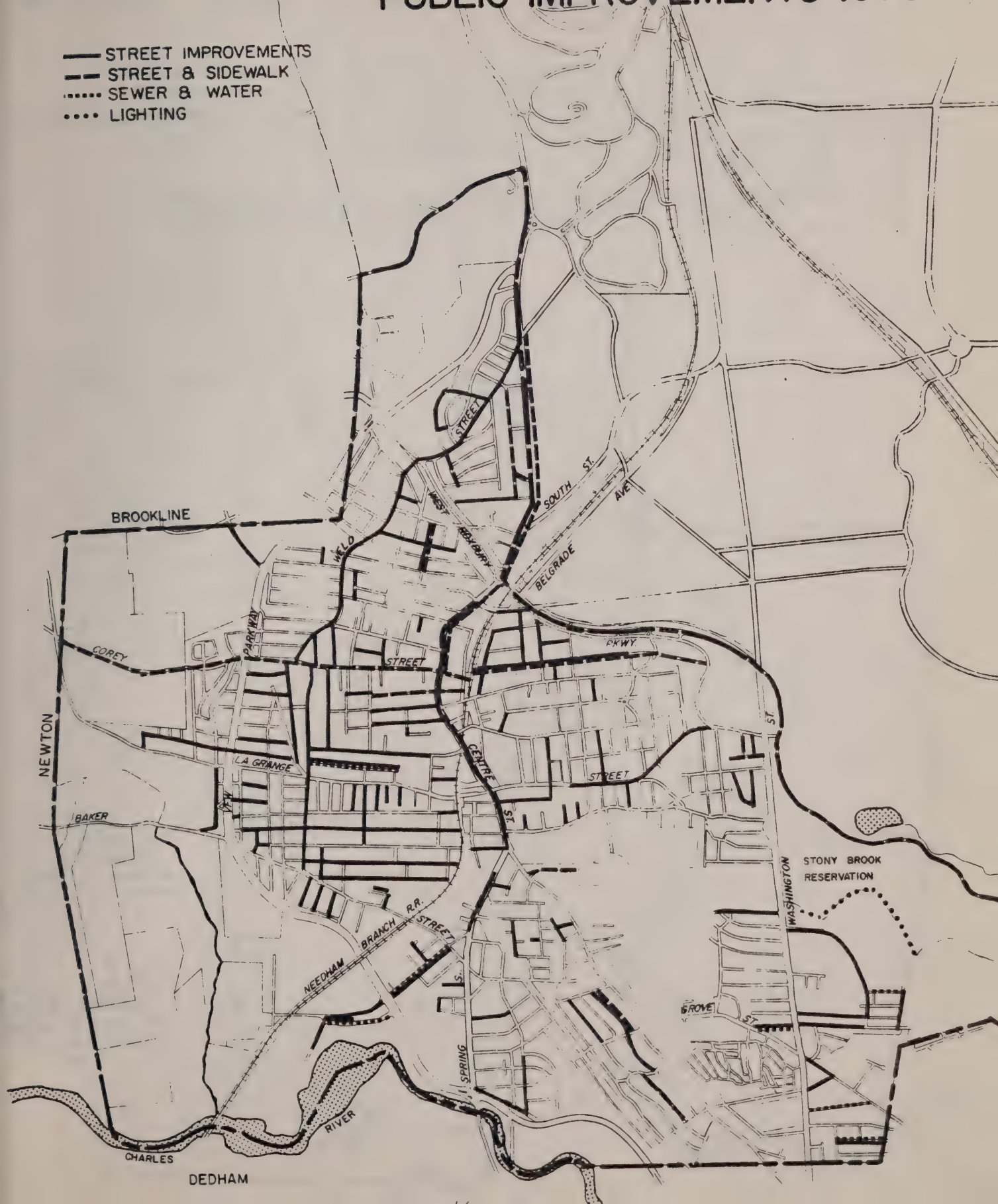
# WEST ROXBURY



0 1000 2000 4000 FEET

## PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1970-74

- STREET IMPROVEMENTS
- - - STREET & SIDEWALK
- ..... SEWER & WATER
- .... LIGHTING





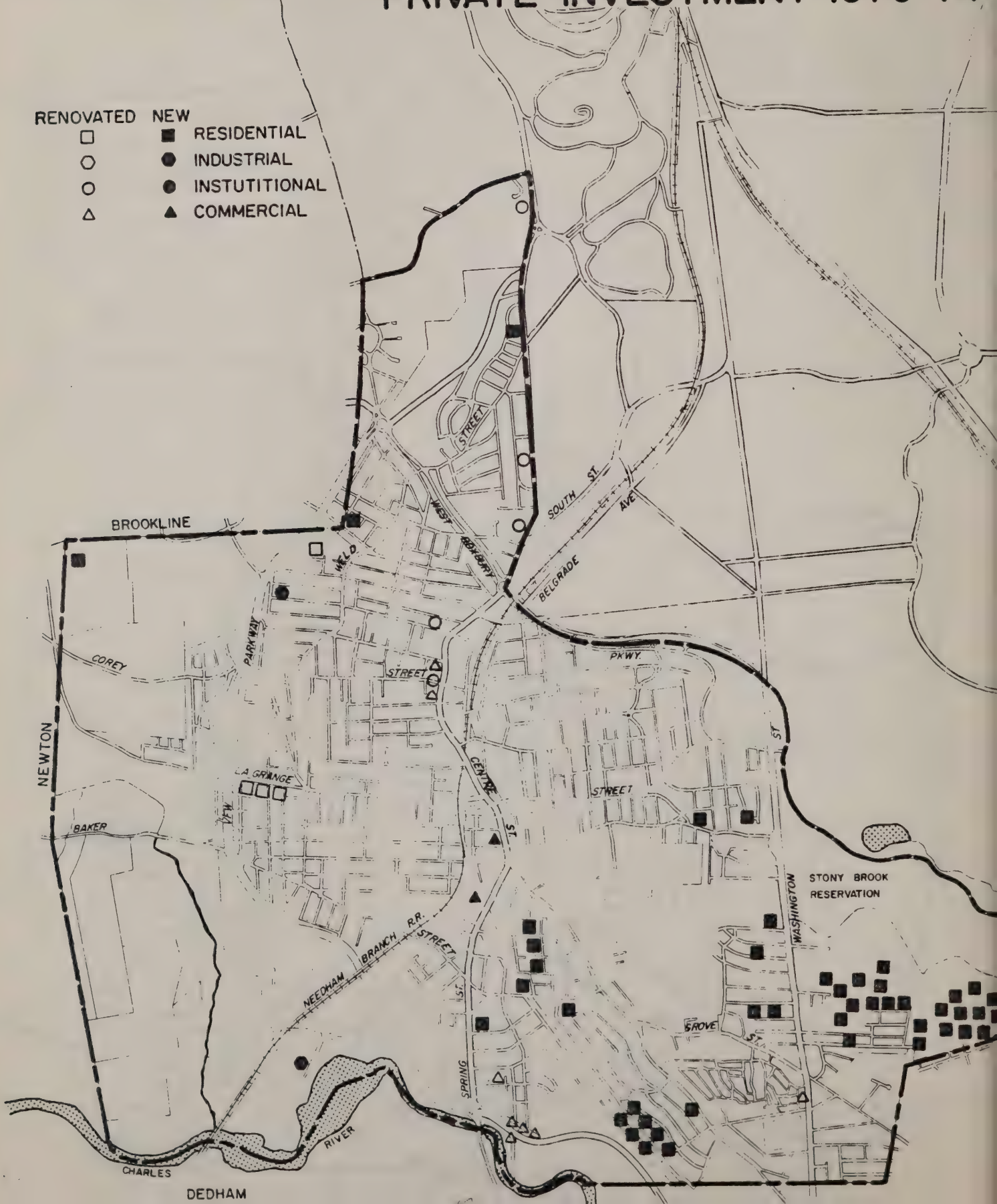
# WEST ROXBURY

0 1000 2000 4000 FEET



## PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1970-74

- | RENOVATED | NEW |               |
|-----------|-----|---------------|
| □         | ■   | RESIDENTIAL   |
| ○         | ●   | INDUSTRIAL    |
| ○         | ●   | INSTITUTIONAL |
| △         | ▲   | COMMERCIAL    |



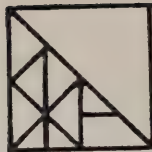


#### D. PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

A review of building permits for construction activity in excess of \$10,000 from 1970-1974 shows there has been residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional investment in West Roxbury. The majority of new construction has been single-family homes scattered throughout the district's southern areas. A number of new homes were constructed during this period along Westmoor, Fensmore, New Haven and Birchland Streets. Two multi-family developments were also constructed at Broadlawn Park and Rockingham Avenue.

Most of the commercial activity has consisted of new and rehabilitated buildings along Centre Street and the VFW Parkway.





# WEST ROXBURY

0 1000 2000 4000 FEET



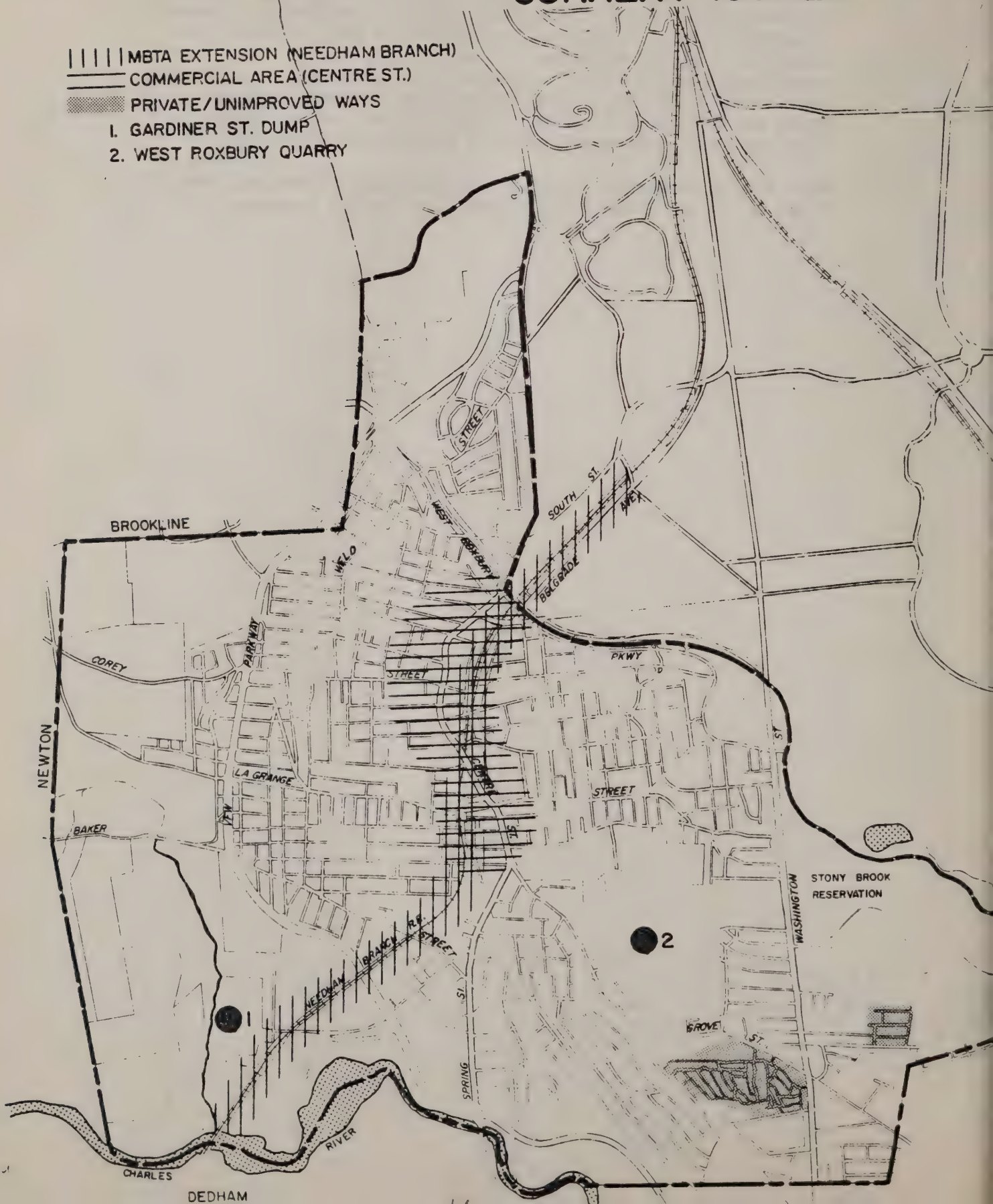
## CURRENT ISSUES

||||| MBTA EXTENSION (NEEDHAM BRANCH)

—— COMMERCIAL AREA (CENTRE ST.)

■■■■ PRIVATE/UNIMPROVED WAYS

1. GARDINER ST. DUMP
2. WEST ROXBURY QUARRY



## A. COMMERCIAL AREA DECLINE

1. Issue

The Centre Street commercial area has continued to be one of the strongest neighborhood commercial areas in the city. It has a strong mix of convenience stores as well as branches of the City's major banks. Nevertheless, there are signs of deterioration in the form of traffic congestion, lack of off-street parking, poor store appearance, an increasing number of storefront vandalisms, and crime. Shoppers are beginning to show preferences towards shopping in the outlying shopping centers such as Dedham Mall and Route 1 establishments where parking is more convenient and access is easier.

Similarly, other smaller commercial areas in West Roxbury at Centre and Weld Streets, Grove and Washington Streets and Washington Street and West Roxbury Parkway have shown more serious signs of deterioration over the past five years. The Washington/Grove commercial area has continued to decline despite the introduction of a large amount of new multi-family construction in the area.

It is not surprising that the only new stores to locate in West Roxbury in the past few years are Star Market and Osco Drug which recently opened along Spring Street, just south of Temple Street. These stores have been successful because they provide convenient off-street parking and attract customers from all of West Roxbury.

Billboards are also a major issue in West Roxbury's commercial areas, especially along Centre Street where billboards are standing on store roofs. These signs confuse the shoppers looking for directions and detract from the appearance of the area.

2. Strategy

The City's commercial area revitalization program should include four major approaches:

1. Development of a storefront revitalization program to provide for a cash rebate to storeowners who renovate their storefronts.
2. An off-street parking program to provide convenient lots within commercial areas. In West Roxbury, a portion of the Pope Lumber property along Corey Street is scheduled in 1975 for an off-street parking lot with a capacity of 100 or more automobiles.



3. A street, sidewalk and lighting program to improve the appearance of the overall area, facilitate pedestrian and vehicle movements and reduce night time crime. In West Roxbury, the Centre Street sodium vapor lighting program has been completed and the resurfacing of Centre Street has been programmed for completion in 1975.
4. The elimination of billboards in local commercial areas will require zoning changes and a city appeal to the State Outdoor Advertising Board to reject annual billboard applications in these critical areas.

The above programs which have been concentrated on Centre Street should also be extended to the district's smaller commercial areas.

## B. NEGATIVE IMPACT OF GARDINER STREET DUMP

### 1. Issue

For a number of years the City has been discussing the closing of the Gardiner Street dump, the only sanitary landfill area for the City. While the existing dump has potential expansion areas which could extend its life, the West Roxbury community is generally opposed to this alternative. Over the years there has been a negative impact in the form of truck traffic along the district's commercial and residential streets. Recently, this negative impact has been viewed as much more serious with the anticipated opening of the nearby West Roxbury High School in 1976 and the nearby acquisition and development of the 179 acre St. Josephs and Lutheran cemetery tracts by the Metropolitan District Commission for a passive recreation preserve. Fuller utilization of the Charles River frontage for recreation purposes is also precluded by the dump's operations.

### 2. Strategy

The phaseout program for the Gardiner Street dump should be accelerated. A regional landfill source should be found or the plans for the South Boston Incinerator finalized and the plant constructed.

A City-wide task force should be activated to complete the plans necessary for this phaseout and finalization of plans for the incinerator plant in South Boston be completed.



## C. REUSE OF THE WEST ROXBURY QUARRY

### 1. Issue

This is a 40-acre tract of vacant land in the central-southern portion of the district. The majority of the site is under two ownerships, the West Roxbury Crushed Stone Company and Roxbury Latin School and much of the site is used for an active sand and gravel operation. Additionally, there are large amounts of land near the site which have been subdivided, but remain vacant. While the industrial operation has been in existence for the last 40 years, land values in the area have increased and some recent construction of multi-family buildings have occurred nearby on Washington and Grove Streets. There is serious concern in the community that if the quarry uses are eliminated, the area may be used as a temporary site for solid waste disposal after the phase-out of the Gardiner Street Dump. There is also opposition to intensive development of the site for multi-family construction.

### 2. Strategy

There is a need to complete a reuse plan and to set development guidelines for the West Roxbury Quarry site. The on-going quarry operation must be considered a liability to any adjacent development mainly due to the noise emanating from the quarry operation and its physical characteristics (175 ft. cliffs, a large open pit, and water filled areas).

In the past, requests have been made by residents for street extensions between Centre and Washington Streets which would allow for new construction of family homes on some of the mapped, but as yet unbuilt streets adjacent to the Quarry.

The City should oppose any use of the Quarry for an interim solid waste transfer station as this would add truck traffic onto residential streets in the area as well as create an undesirable land use.

## D. RESIDENTIAL AREA IMPROVEMENT

### 1. Issue

There are a few areas in the district which show a need for housing repair assistance. The Housing Improvement Program (HIP) has resulted in assistance being extended to approximately 129 homes since the program has been in operation. Many of these homes are located in the Washington/ Grove Streets area, a densely settled neighborhood. There is also concern that because of the growing number of elderly residents living in large and increasingly costly single-family homes, illegal conversions may be on the increase, especially in stable areas such as Bellevue Hill and the Parkway. Because of the proliferation of non-residential uses (i.e., nursing homes) in the V.F.W. Parkway area, there is also concern that the negative effect of these uses could spill over into nearby residential areas.

### 2. Strategy

Continuation of the HIP program in West Roxbury is planned in the 1975 CDRS program, with a site office already open in Roslindale Square serving both Roslindale and West Roxbury. Over 200 buildings are expected to be repaired during 1975-1976 under this program. The areas which should be emphasized under this program include Washington/Grove Streets, Spring Street and Baker Street.

In critical residential areas, future development should be limited or restricted. For example, in the VFW area a master plan is needed to make recommendations on the reuse of vacant land areas still in existence between Baker and Gardiner Streets. Finally, capital investments should be used to strengthen existing residential areas.

## E. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS-NEEDHAM BRANCH MBTA EXTENSION

### 1. Issue

The district is located on the end of the City's mass transit program, with connections to the Forest Hills Orange Line MBTA by bus service only. The proposed extension of the Orange Line along the Needham Branch Railroad from Forest Hills has been warmly accepted by most residents in West Roxbury although there has been discussion over the type of service (i.e. rapid transit v.s. commuter rail) and the location of stations within West Roxbury. Currently, city residents are working out agreements on the type of service with residents of Needham (where the line may terminate), and with MBTA's consultants (C. E. Maguire Associates), who are completing the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the MBTA extension.

### 2. Strategy

The City, the BRA and the Southwest Corridor Development Coordinator are working closely with local groups as well as with the MBTA consultants on the final determination of the type of service and station location areas for the proposed extension line. This effort should terminate in the Fall, of 1975, although work program delays may extend the total EIR report until the first part of 1976. At the same time, the BRA expects to be working closely with the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission on joint development possibilities at the various station locations in both Roslindale and West Roxbury. This effort should be underway in the summer of 1975.

The timetable for construction of the Needham Branch Extension Line requires at least one year in engineering-technical design after the completion and acceptance of the EIR report by the State and Federal governments.



## F. UPGRADING OF PRIVATE WAYS TO PUBLIC STREETS

### 1. Issue

West Roxbury contains a large number of private ways which are generally unimproved and unpaved. Aside from problems of municipal service delivery to these areas in the form of refuse collections and police patrolling, residents are often unable to drive in the area, especially during heavy rains and snow storms.

There are a number of private ways scattered throughout the district, but the Grove Street area has by far the largest number. A recent survey of the private ways in this area shows many streets unimproved and unpaved.

### 2. Strategy

The City should program the upgrading of the district's private ways to public streets over the next five years. At least two approaches, however, are needed. For streets which are below the City's minimum standard for a public street and where widening is not possible without "hardship" takings, city funds should be used to assist local residents in repaving these streets. For streets where widening is possible without "hardship" takings, city funds should be used to upgrade these ways to public streets, construct sidewalks, and to provide street lighting. Final acceptance by the Public Improvement Commission will be required to establish public streets.

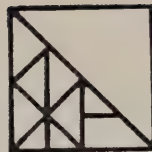
## G. SCARCITY OF SOCIAL SERVICES

### 1. Issues

West Roxbury, like many of the southwest Boston communities has a growing number of elderly people and an increasing number of social problems associated with its youth, especially teenagers. Today more senior citizens are living alone and away from their families who have traditionally provided them with needed services. Teenagers who have rejected conventional recreation programs want after school jobs and new types of recreation programs.

### 2. Strategy

A comprehensive listing of the available social services and needs should be completed. There have been, however, some recent efforts by the City which should be noted. First, the 1975 CDRS program has funded the establishment of a southwest health center at the Roslindale Municipal Building to serve the health needs of senior citizens and poorer families who may not be able to afford the services of physicians in private practice. Second, the city's Youth Activities Commission has used funds to place teenagers who are first offenders on a part-time basis with businesses in the area. These teenagers are being carefully placed and under the supervision of city youth activities workers.



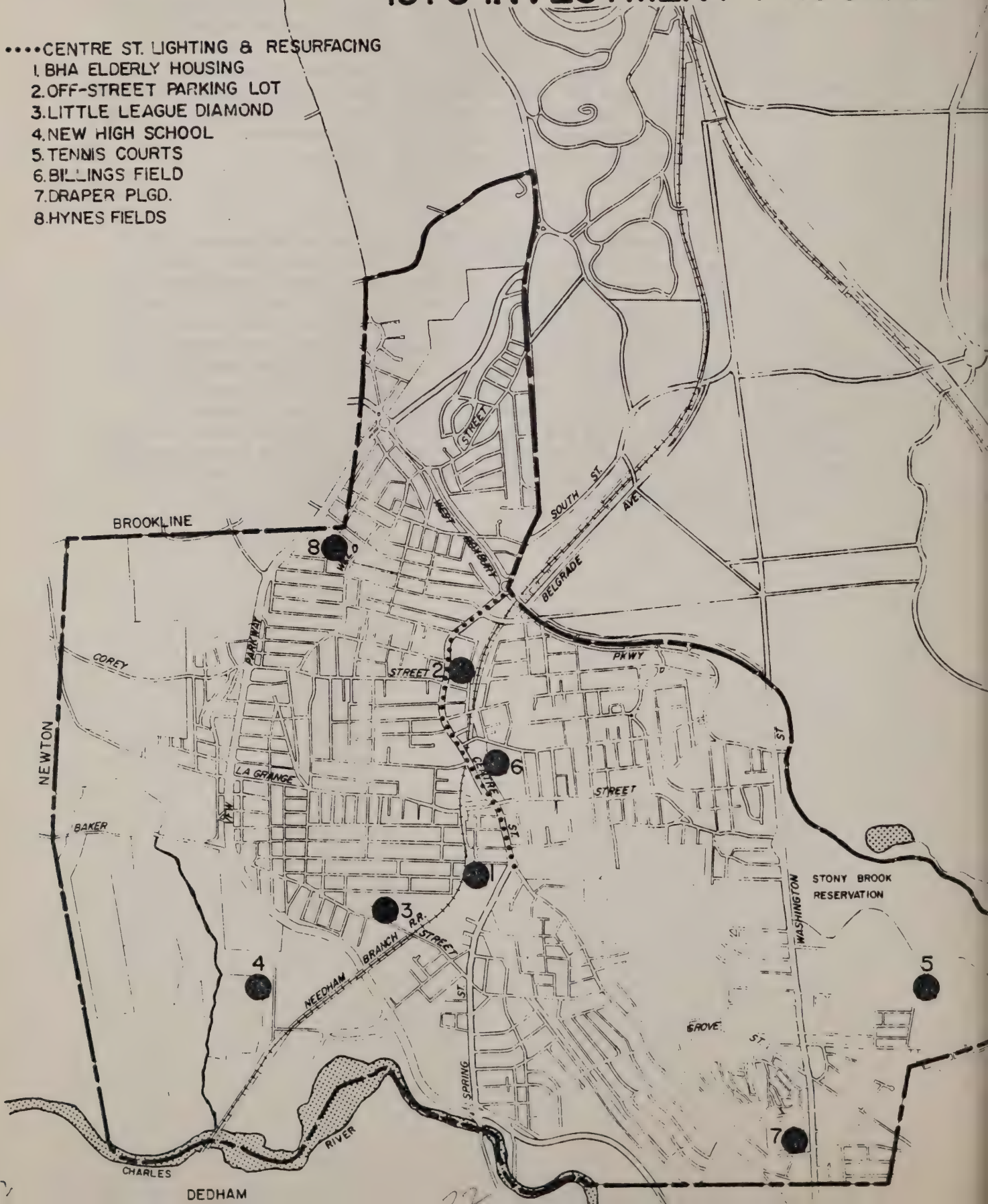
# WEST ROXBURY

0 1000 2000 4000 FEET

## 1975 INVESTMENT PROGRAM

.....CENTRE ST. LIGHTING & RESURFACING

- 1. BHA ELDERLY HOUSING
- 2. OFF-STREET PARKING LOT
- 3. LITTLE LEAGUE DIAMOND
- 4. NEW HIGH SCHOOL
- 5. TENNIS COURTS
- 6. BILLINGS FIELD
- 7. DRAPER PLGD.
- 8. HYNES FIELDS





### III. 1975 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1975 public investment program concentrates on three areas: housing, commercial area revitalization, capital improvements, and neighborhood health services.

#### A. HOUSING

The Housing Improvement Program (HIP) which provides incentives for rehabilitation of 1-6 unit owner-occupied structures will be available throughout West Roxbury and has funds for approximately 200 buildings. A site office in Roslindale Square is currently open to serve residents of West Roxbury.

The construction of 104 units of elderly housing at Spring and Temple Streets has been approved by the Boston Housing Authority under the Federally sponsored "Turnkey" Housing Program.

#### B. COMMERCIAL AREA REVITALIZATION

The City's efforts toward commercial area revitalization has included a Sodium Vapor Lighting program (1974) and the acquisition and development of a portion of the Pope Lumber Company parcel for a municipal off-street parking area. In addition, Centre Street will be resurfaced between West Roxbury Parkway and Spring Street.

#### C. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The City's capital investment program for West Roxbury includes the construction of the \$15.9 million Southwest High School; the renovation of Billings Field, Draper Playground and Hynes Playground; the construction of a second Little League Baseball diamond along Baker Street; and new tennis courts at the Ohrenberger Elementary School. In addition, the City is providing a matching share of funds with the State for engineering design of traffic improvements at Church and Weld Streets.

#### D. NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH SERVICES

The rehabilitation of a portion of the Roslindale Municipal Building for use as a health center (operated by Faulkner Hospital) will help to improve health service delivery in the entire southwestern area of Boston, including West Roxbury.

#### IV.

#### FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

It is important that public funds be used in future years to maintain the viability of West Roxbury's residential neighborhoods. The areas for future public investment are outlined in a general manner below. These areas should be discussed and refined at neighborhood meetings during the coming months and specific recommendations made. The citizen participation process is critical to the selection of specific projects to be funded.

Future investment for housing should include the continuation of the Housing Improvement Program to provide for the rehabilitation of approximately 200 housing units annually. In addition, 100 units of elderly housing should be constructed in 1976 to respond to West Roxbury's needs.

Future capital investment needs include establishment of a five year program for repaving or reconstructing private ways throughout the district, reconstruction of Centre Street (as well as sidewalks), replacement of Centre Street fire station, and a new MBTA transit line along Needham Branch (Penn Central) Railroad.

A storefront rehabilitation program should be established and directed to Centre Street merchants. This program should provide a rebate to business owners for fixing-up the exteriors of their stores and could be extended to the 60 stores along Centre Street. To reduce crime and vandalism, funds for a footpatrolman along Centre Street should be continued and expanded.

# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Commercial Area Decline	Storefront revitalization program		At least one block of stores yearly should be funded with this program
	Off-street parking program	Acquisition & development of Pope Lumber site for off street parking lot-\$700,000	spin-off commercial development from the off-street parking area
	Street, sidewalk & lighting program	Centre Street sodium lighting - \$150,000	after the off-street parking lot is completed, Centre St. should be reconstructed, sidewalks widened, & tree plantings completed
Reuse of West Roxbury Quarry	Reuse plan		Pave "paper" and private streets on fringe of quarry to attract new residential development
	Development Guidelines		
	Oppose use of quarry for refuse transfer station		
Residential Area Improvements	use of HIP	HIP-\$150,000 (200 buildings)	HIP-Minimum 200 units per year
	Limit & restrict development in critical residential areas		
	Provide housing for the elderly	104-units of BHA Elderly Housing at Spring & Temple Streets-\$3.0 million	Provide an additional '100 units of low/moderate income elderly housing on Pope Lumber site



# FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Residential Area Improvements (cont.)	Capital Expenditures to strengthen neighborhoods (e.g. parks, schools)	Southwest High School - \$15.9 million Billings Field - \$252,000 Draper Plgd. - 25,000 Hynes Plgd. - 40,000 Baker Street Little League Baseball Field - Second Diamond - 40,000	
Public Transportation Improvements - Needham Branch MBTA Line	Establish guidelines for type of service to be introduced in West Roxbury		
	Establish guidelines for joint development possibilities at stations location		
Upgrading private ways to public streets	Repave private ways		Establish a 5-year program for repaving private ways
	Reconstruct private ways and acceptance as public streets		Establish a 5-year program for reconstructing private ways and acceptance as public streets
Scarcity of social services	Prepare comprehensive review of service available	-Roslindale-Southwest Area Health Center at Roslindale Square-\$76,500 Youth Activities Board program for teenagers who are first offenders	Day care centers-teen counselling services-extended elderly assistance-transportation, home maintenance

















